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by Paul
McCartney



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Protest over 'world's nuclear dustbin'

Uranium sent to Britain in secret deal

By MICHAEL EVANS, ROBIN LODGE AND PHILIP WEBSTER

A LOAD of nuclear weapons-grade uranium is due to be flown from the former Soviet republic of Georgia to Scotland this week after a secret deal between Tony Blair and President Clinton to prevent it falling into the hands of terrorists.

Britain agreed to take the uranium — which will be reprocessed at Dounreay and used to make medical isotopes for cancer treatments — after two years of negotiation failed to find a home for it in Russia, America or France.

The material — 9lb of "fresh" highly enriched uranium and 14lb of spent radioactive fuel — will be flown in by an American military plane within the next few days, although the date and time of arrival are being kept secret to comply with what the UK Atomic Energy Agency described as international security practice.

But the decision, and the secrecy surrounding it, brought protests yesterday from environmental groups and MPs of all parties. Alex Salmond, the Scottish National Party leader, accused the Prime Minister of "prostituting Scotland as a world nuclear dustbin to curry favour with the Clinton Administration".

Labour MPs voiced concerns that Britain might be seen as a "soft touch" for the dumping of nuclear waste, and their fears were echoed by environmental groups which thought the Georgian shipment could lead to more consignments from research reactors around the world. John Redwood, the Shadow President of the Board of Trade, said: "We want to know why Mr Blair has done this deal and how it squares with his claim to be super green."

The operation, codenamed Auburn Endeavour, was launched

after Mr Clinton raised safety fears with President Shevardnadze of Georgia, a republic plagued by unrest and bordered by unstable nations — including the rebel Russian republic of Chechnya.

The uranium, which is in storage at a civil nuclear research centre near the capital, Tbilisi, had been used for scientific projects, but there is said to be enough there to build a nuclear bomb and American officials feared that it could end up in the hands of Chechen rebels, Iran or other aspiring nuclear nations. There have been a number of reports that Iran has acquired bomb-grade fuel from a former Soviet republic.

Russia had been expected to take the fuel, but negotiations between Moscow and Washington which began two years ago failed to produce a deal. The American Administration felt unable to accept the material because of expected fierce opposition from environ-

mentalists, and France, which has a large reprocessing capability, reportedly declined to help.

Discussions between Britain and America began last year and the secret deal was clinched when Mr Blair met Mr Clinton in Washington in February. By then, concern about the material was growing after another attempt on Mr Shevardnadze's life.

Challenged about the decision as Mr Blair returned from the Middle East yesterday, the Prime Minister's official spokesman said that it had been made on safety grounds to prevent the possibility of the material being misused. It was not a commercial deal.

The Foreign Office said that a number of departments had been involved in the negotiations and the intention had been to announce the shipment after its arrival. The deal demonstrated Britain's commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and had a practical side because the uranium could be used to produce medical isotopes.

The UK Atomic Energy Agency said that the material could be processed safely at Dounreay and would be transported in internationally approved containers in accordance with normal security arrangements. The Dounreay reprocessing plant would need modifications and upgrading to handle the Georgian consignment, but the agency said that these would have been necessary anyway to fulfil another contract with ICI.

The containers which will hold the uranium are designed to withstand maximum impact, including crashes. Nuclear material has been transported by air in the past and strict guidelines have ensured that the containers are built to survive accidents.



"Relax — that's not beef on the bone, that's uranium"



Louise Sullivan is alleged to have shaken six-month-old Caroline, who was left in her care

Nanny to face new charge as baby dies

By STEPHEN FARRELL

AN AUSTRALIAN nanny is likely to be charged with murder or manslaughter after a six-month-old girl in her care died yesterday.

Marcel Jongen, a director of an offshore investment company, and his wife Muriel were at their daughter Caroline's bedside in the paediatric intensive-care unit at Great Ormond Street Hospital when she died.

Their five-in nanny, Louise Sullivan, 26, was remanded in custody on Monday by magistrates at Clerkenwell accused of causing Caroline grievous bodily harm by allegedly shaking her.

A Scotland Yard spokesman confirmed that detectives will consult the Crown Prosecution Service regarding further charges following a post-mortem examination at St Pancras Mortuary today.

But sources close to the police inquiry said new charges were expected when Ms Sullivan next appears at Clerkenwell Magistrates Court on Monday.

"The likelihood is that she will be re-charged with another offence, likely to be manslaughter or possibly murder," he said.

Sullivan, who was left with Caroline when Mr and Mrs Jongen went to work shortly before 7am on April 17, four and a half hours later an ambulance was called to their house in Cricklewood, north London, and Caroline was taken to the Royal Free Hospital before being transferred to Great Ormond Street.

The baby underwent urgent neurological assessment and a series of tests including brain scans and two sets of brain stem tests.

A spokeswoman said: "The second set of brain stem tests conducted this afternoon confirms that she was brain dead and there was no hope for her survival."

Ms Sullivan, whose mother flew in from Australia yesterday, arrived in England last April on a visa allowing her to work for two years. Her references said she had worked as a nanny for five years.

The Police asked for parents who had employed Ms Sullivan to contact them on 0181 733 6275.

Mass meeting of Diana witnesses

The French magistrate investigating the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, will summon the leading witnesses to Paris in June in a final attempt to establish a definitive version of events.

A legal device known as a confrontation will bring witnesses with conflicting accounts face to face. Page 7

£18m footballer

Manchester United have been linked to a bid of £18 million for a British record fee for Alessandro Di Piero, 23, Juventus's imperious Italian forward. Page 44

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Calais strike hits Channel ferries

By SUSAN BELL IN PARIS AND ARTHUR LEATHLEY

FRENCH seamen caused huge disruption to Channel ferries yesterday when they staged a wildcat strike in support of a colleague disciplined over drugs.

Thousands of British holidaymakers and lorry drivers were stranded on ferries outside Calais before being forced to return to Dover. Others from Dover had already been rerouted to Zeebrugge.

It was the second time in less than three weeks that workers had forced the French port's closure.

Passengers planning day-trips to France had to abandon their journeys, and were given refunds.

Port staff were supporting industrial action by ferry workers angered at the decision of SeaFrance, the French ferry operator, to bar a sailor after he was convicted of a drugs offence. The strikers began their protest at 7.30pm on Monday and yesterday

Catholic is shot dead in Armagh

By MARTIN FLETCHER

A ROMAN CATHOLIC council worker died after being shot by a lone gunman in the loyalist stronghold of Portadown, County Armagh, late yesterday afternoon.

The man, in his late thirties and father of a two-year-old son, was believed to have been shot in the back of the head at the civic recycling site where he worked. His assailant was on a bicycle.

The Loyalist Volunteer Force, which opposes the peace process and is not on ceasefire, has a strong presence in the area, but there was no immediate claim of responsibility. Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, appealed for calm.

The funeral took place earlier yesterday of Mark McNeill, a 32-year-old Catholic with five children who was killed by gunmen at a taxi depot in West Belfast last Friday night.

Vauxhall links UK pay to mark

By FRASER NELSON

VAUXHALL, the car manufacturer, has offered its 9,800 British workers a radical deal that will link their pay to the strength of the pound against the German mark.

The three-year deal, believed to be the first of its kind in British industry, will trigger an 0.5 per cent salary increase in year three if the average exchange rate for sterling falls below DM2.7 for two consecutive months.

Last week, Nick Reilly, chairman of Vauxhall UK, said he would forgo his £160,000 basic annual salary this year. Yesterday he said: "This is a realistic and responsible package which should help secure the long-term future of manufacturing operations in the UK."

Unions were claiming victory last night. They had feared that Vauxhall would force through sharp wage reductions to undercut its sister plants in Germany and

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Beef-on-bone ban to stay despite court defeat

By MICHAEL HORNSBY AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

THE Government rejected calls to lift the beef-on-the-bone ban last night after a Scottish court threw out the first prosecution for breach of the regulations.

Jim Sutherland, a hotelier, who could have faced up to two years in jail, was cleared by Selkirk Sheriff Court, which ruled that the regulation under which he had been charged was defective and ultra vires.

Raising a clenched fist in a victory salute outside the court, Mr Sutherland told jubilant supporters: "We have

a sheriff who saw what the problem was, and he was prepared to stand there in court and tell the Government that they have got it seriously wrong on this occasion."

Mr Sutherland, 44, who runs the Lodge Hotel at Carfraemill near Lander in the Borders, said he was not worried by the appeal against the verdict lodged by the procurator fiscal. But his lawyer, David Kidd, cautioned that it would be "a bit premature" for people to start serving beef on the bone until the appeal had been heard, which could take several months.

The sheriff, James Paterson, said the prosecution had failed because Regulation 3 (2), on which Mr Sutherland had been charged, made it an offence to use bone-in beef in the "preparation" of food for sale.

In the Food Safety Act, under which the Beef Bone Regulations 1997 were introduced, the term preparation meant any form of manufacturing, processing or treatment, including subjecting food to heat or cold, the sheriff said. If the regulation were to be enforced, it would mean that any carter, merely by chilling a carcass or part of a carcass of beef, would be guilty of the same offence of which Mr Sutherland had been charged. This was a "manifest absurdity", it would,

Mr Paterson said, make the distribution of beef from slaughterhouses to butchers and caterers illegal because all such meat should always be placed in the chilling room.

"Thus in one short sentence... Parliament has destroyed the present system of meat distribution and undermined one of the main purposes of the Food Safety Act, namely the protection of consumers from eating bad meat", he said.

Michael Jack, the Shadow Agriculture Minister, called last night on the Government to repeal the ban: "The judgment today throws the regulations Continued on page 2, col 4



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Scottish MPs take a cruise towards the millennial iceberg

CRISPIN BLUNT, the Tory MP for Reigate, failed yesterday to impress MPs and ministers with the problem of making Scottish computers "millennium compliant". No wonder. A more urgent problem confronts Westminster. Are Scottish backbenchers millennium compliant?

Watching government MPs at Questions to the Secretary of State for Scotland these days, one witnesses a Westminster timewarp. These MPs are not even New Labour compliant, let alone Blair compliant. A bug seems to

have prevented their mechanisms from recognising May 1, 1997. They have flicked back to the 1980s. They think they are still in opposition. They think there's always going to be a place in London for an MP from Scotland. Their logic circuitry cannot comprehend one simple instruction: future operations are soon to be conducted on a different machine, with a new keyboard, located in Edinburgh. Different fingers will move the mouse. This system is closing down.

Alex Salmond (Banff & Buchan) knows all this. The SNP leader has grown in stature and command and treats the front bench with contemptuous disregard. Like all populists with a passionate cause, he combines an open countenance with an instinct for the low blow. Labour hate him. They squeak and mutter when he speaks.

The Tories and Liberal Democrats just try to pretend the nationalists aren't there. "Is rural despair," asked the Tory spokesman Bernard Jenkin, "part of the Government's policy for the gnats and the midges to feed on?" The pun was intended. I

cannot speak for the midges, but the Nats are doing well. Plagued by Nats, Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, might hope for solid support behind him. But I spotted only one obvious Blairite jelly-baby among the ranks of Scottish Labour backbenchers yesterday: young Douglas Alexander (Paisley South), who bowed Mr Dewar a ball so soft it was a mercy



MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

it did not disintegrate in flight. Would he tell us all how much investment the Government's excellent NHS changes would release for extra health care in Scotland? Miraculously, Dewar just happened to have the figures with him.

But Mr Alexander looked as out of place among Scots Labour as an insurance clerk on a strikers' picket. More typical was John McAllion (Dundee East), who told Dewar the NHS was based on socialist principles and the Government needed "more of these 'old' Labour ideas, not fewer".

The S-word is a dreadful curse among Blairites, but the Scots have always been noted for strong language. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) is too loyal a Scot to single out his own Government for attack. He attacked the last one too. He piled in with a question which began with a kick at the Tories (Dewar looked relieved) and moved on to a kick at the Government. Their

plans, he said, would freeze the elderly out of hospital beds. Dewar looked pained. To watch in operation a legislative chamber whose days, as constituted, must be numbered, but which seems to have received no intimation of its own mortality, is an eerie experience. MPs were asking about water fluoridation in Scotland; about the Chief Constable of Grampian; about hospitals, and computers, and rural deprivation; about the Scottish legal system, sentencing and the design of a parliament building north of the border. It is

inconceivable that any of these questions would be for answer at Westminster once Scotland has devolved government under its own parliament. Scottish Questions at Westminster must wither. Are we, then, saying that Scots Westminster MPs will be sent down to London to ask about everything but Scotland? There has been no statement to resolve this mystery of a questions session cruising towards an iceberg. Is the Commons compliant? Time for Mr Blair's millennial bug busters to inspect their own nest.

Cook to fore as Labour marks a year in office

Minister is back in favour, reports Jill Sherman

ROBIN COOK will attempt to relaunch his political career tonight with the first of a series of speeches to mark the first anniversary of the Labour Government.

The Foreign Secretary has suffered over the past 12 months from bouts of bad publicity after the break-up of his marriage, his relationship with his new wife, Gwyneth Paltrow, and his relationship with foreign leaders during visits abroad.

But the Prime Minister has personally endorsed Mr Cook's rehabilitation, suggesting that he make the first speech in a series by Cabinet ministers to acknowledge Labour's year in office. His aides also made known that Tony Blair regards the Foreign Secretary as a "major force" in the Government.

Mr Cook, one of the most leftwing members of the Cabinet, will in turn show that he is fully committed to Mr Blair's modernisation project and his desire to achieve a "third way" in politics.

Mr Cook has rarely strayed from his Foreign Office brief over the past nine months and his relations with Downing Street cooled considerably after Mr Blair's press secretary gave him only hours to decide whether to leave his wife.

But Mr Blair has now ensured that a potentially dangerous critic in the Cabinet is firmly tied into his political strategy. During his speech at the National Liberal Club in London this evening Mr Cook will argue that "constant modernisation is the only basis on which policy can remain relevant in a changing world".

Mr Cook will also underline the six principles of Mr Blair's "third way": strong communities; economic efficiency; open

politics; rights and responsibilities; partnership and co-operation and constant modernisation.

He will point to the Government's successes over the past year, but will focus on areas that will be followed through in the future. Mr Cook will stress the importance of constitutional reform and in particular Labour's commitment to the second stage of reforming the House of Lords. Labour has recently come under criticism for proposing the abolition of hereditary peers but failing to produce detailed proposals for the second phase of change.

However, tonight Mr Cook, an enthusiastic advocate for reform, will stress that Labour is committed to developing proposals for a more democratic second chamber. "We want a body which reflects the will of the people voting today rather than the whims of kings in centuries gone by. A body that does not give dominance in any one party, but remains independent, providing effective scrutiny of legislation. We will not be knocked off course over this reform."

The speech which provides

a broad critique of government strategy will emphasise that there will be no big spending spree this summer whatever the outcome of the comprehensive spending review. Resources would be channelled on priority areas such as education and health, he will say.

Mr Cook was known to be unhappy about some of the welfare reforms proposed including Gordon Brown's decision to dock benefit from youngsters failing to take up job opportunities under his New Deal.

But tonight he will argue that the "New Deal" programme will be the lasting monument of our first five years in power.

The speech will also touch on foreign policy over the last 12 months and suggest that it has introduced an "ethical dimension" to policy making.

Earlier yesterday Mr Cook expanded on this theme making clear that there were times when it was right to "condemn publicly, loudly and firmly". But pressed on his record on human rights over the past year he said: "I would certainly robustly resist the idea that the bulk of my activity has been going round and hectoring people."

Launching the first annual report on human rights at a conference in London, he said that the only way to make real progress was through partnerships with countries.

The Government had found a "third way" to tackle the issue — not to ignore, not to lecture, but to seek discussion with countries across the world with a view to improving their human rights record. Mr Cook added: "The focus of our strategy is not to trumpet condemnation. The focus is to make real, practical improvements."

Lawyers handling three other prosecutions in England, which are due for their first hearings next month said they



Triumph in court: hotelier Jim Sutherland after winning his case in Seikirk

Beef-on-bone case victory

Continued from page 1
on beef on the bone into chaos, uncertainty and confusion."

But Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture Minister, insisted that the ban would stay. "This case turned on a legal technicality, the regulations are essential for the protection of public health and they remain in force", he said.

Lawyers handling three other prosecutions in England, which are due for their first hearings next month said they

were studying the Scottish ruling and could not say immediately how it would affect their cases.

Mr Sutherland was first summoned to appear before the Seikirk court on March 10 after local health inspectors reported him for serving Aberdeen Angus on the bone to 180 people at a dinner on December 22.

The ban had been introduced by the Government six days earlier after advice from

scientists that nervous tissue attached to bone might be infected with "mad cow" disease.

Mr Sutherland did not charge his diners for the meal on December 22. Instead they donated £1,700 to the Marie Curie Cancer Care charity. This complicated the task of the prosecution, which had to prove that Mr Sutherland had committed a criminal offence merely by preparing the meat to be served.

Don't score points off the poor, says Field

Frank Field, Minister for Welfare Reform, condemned politicians and social reformers for using the debate on poverty to score "cheap" and "futile" party political points. Giving evidence to the Commons Select Committee on Social Security, the minister said that poverty and social exclusion could not be measured simply by counting the number of people on benefits.

More accurate indicators of deprivation were the "disconcerting" level of suicide among young men and the incidence of low birthweight, he said. "Generally, the younger and poorer you are, as a parent, the greater the chance you will have a low birthweight baby."

Oil spillage charges

Mark Andrews, the Milford Haven harbourmaster, and the port authority were committed for trial to Swansea Crown Court charged with negligence over the Sea Empress oil spillage of 1996, which led to 72,000 tonnes of crude oil polluting one of Britain's most environmentally sensitive areas. Mr Andrews is charged with discharging oil into the Haven and with polluting the Haven and the Welsh coastline. The port authority faces two similar charges.

Tube chief told to quit

John Prescott demanded the resignation of Peter Ford, the chairman of London Transport, as ministers began moves towards raising £7 billion for London's Underground system. Mr Ford was told to leave his post from today, and the Deputy Prime Minister said that more changes would be made to senior management. Mr Ford had voiced opposition to the Government's plans to break up the Tube network into privately-run and state-operated sections.

Fiennes cousin missing

A rescue operation was under way last night for the cousin of Antarctic explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, who went missing on Sunday as he flew back from France in his vintage Tiger Moth plane. Roger Fiennes left Dieppe in northern France bound for Heathrow Airport near Ashford, Kent. His last radio contact was with French air traffic controllers half an hour into the 90-minute flight. Three helicopters were searching the English Channel.

Tiger attack man hunted

A British wildlife expert is being sought by police in Thailand after a boy aged five had his arm ripped off by a tiger that had been adopted by animal lovers in Britain. A police spokesman in Chachengsao, 100 miles east of Bangkok, said that Timothy Redford, a representative of the British charity Care for the Wild International, was wanted on a charge of negligence. Mr Redford is alleged to have supervised the building of the tiger compound.

Teacher investigated

Child protection officers are investigating a teacher at one of the country's oldest independent girls' schools, police confirmed. The investigation at Queen's College in Harley Street, Central London, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary, centres on an incident alleged to have taken place more than ten years ago. Lady Goodhart, principal of the £6,600-a-year school, said a member of staff was suspended on April 3. She declined to comment further.

Body found in concrete

Police investigating the disappearance of a woman yesterday found parts of a human body encased in concrete in her garage. Susan Craven, 54, was last seen alive at her home on the outskirts of Sheffield at the beginning of last month. Mrs Craven was in the process of divorcing her husband and shared the house with her lover, Kenneth Peatfield. He was charged with her murder earlier this month.

Spice Girls strike it rich

The Spice Girls have become Britain's highest-earning band, making an estimated £43 million between them last year. They not only leaptfrogged the Beatles (£26 million) into top spot but far outperformed such proven money-makers as the Rolling Stones (£31 million) and Sir Elton John (£25 million). In 1996 the Spice Girls managed only £8 million between them.

If it's red, it's British

British tomatoes now have an official colour, intended to help the public to recognise them. The fact that few British tomatoes as yet conform to the dark, rich red, which is officially described as Pantone Red 186, fazes the Tomato Growers' Association not one whit. They have adopted the colour for their new trade logo, which will soon be appearing on British tomatoes.

Police chief shuns new call to quit

By GILLIAN HARRIS, SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

IAN OLIVER, Chief Constable of Grampian, hung on to his job yesterday, despite a unanimous vote of no confidence by an emergency meeting of force's police board.

The board then gave Dr Oliver, 58, ten days to resign. He had attempted to broker a deal which would allow him to retire on May 5, collect three months' salary and hold on to his £60,000-a-year pension. The board said that his request was "inappropriate".

The chief constable resisted calls on Monday for his resignation by the Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, after a damning report into his force's handling of a child murder inquiry.

Dr Oliver left yesterday's meeting via a tunnel. In a statement, he said: "I offered to bring forward my retire-

ment date to May 5, and go on immediate leave, but the board would not accept it." He is to retire in September.

Grampian Police Authority is the first to use legal powers against a chief constable under section 44D of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967, which lets the board seek permission from the Scottish Secretary to remove Dr Oliver immediately. He will attend a meeting of the board on May 1, to present his case.

The report over Scott Simpson, 9 — murdered by a paedophile — accused police of maladministration, neglect and incompetence. Dr Oliver said yesterday that he accepted 27 of the 36 recommendations, but denied that no senior officer was in charge, and that police displayed "serious corporate failure".

Speed trap levy to fund cameras

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY, TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

MOTORISTS caught speeding by roadside cameras face an additional £20 charge on top of existing fines under plans put to ministers by senior police officers.

The huge cost of installing and maintaining speed cameras has forced some police forces to have only one in eight devices operating at any one time. However, police leaders insist that an extra charge, earmarked to cover the costs of cameras, is now essential to force speed reductions that they claim would save at least 300 lives each year.

They say that a £20 charge, on top of the existing £40 fixed fine, would enable them to operate more of the existing cameras and move towards more advanced technology.

Ministers are currently examining ways of improving

road safety, concentrating on reducing the number of speed-related deaths, estimated at around 1,200 annually.

The proposals by the Association of Chief Police Officers would raise nearly £20 million a year from almost one million convictions. Most of the money would be retained by police forces, with the remainder being shared between magistrates, the Crown Prosecution Service and local councils.

Transport ministers are keen to support the plans, but Treasury officials are wary of allowing money to be retained for specific purposes. However, there are precedents on parking fines and penalties imposed on motorists whose vehicles break emissions laws. Ministers are likely to make a decision this summer.

Judge packs case in holiday dispute

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A JUDGE has ordered the solicitors involved in a court action over a holiday to pack their bags and fly with him to Malta.

More than 200 dissatisfied customers are claiming compensation or have claims pending against Malta Sun for the nights they spent at the three-star Palm Court Hotel in Qwara between 1996 and 1998, which they say were a nightmare.

Malta Sun has vigorously denied their allegations and in a separate action had launched a writ for libel against Anne Robinson, the presenter of the BBC's *Watchdog* for a report on the company.

After hearing conflicting accounts of the services that the hotel offers and watching the programme and rebuttals by

the company on *Right to Reply*, the district judge Anthony Cleary decided to adjourn proceedings to the Mediterranean so he could see for himself.

Ros Fernihough, who is representing the first six claims to come up in Birmingham Country Court said: "So far as we know, this is quite unprecedented. But no matter what his honour says, nothing would induce me to spend a night in that hotel."

She said she had seen the BBC undercover team's videos of "free-range" cockroaches, presented in evidence.

Tom Brown, solicitor for Malta Sun, confirmed that the proceedings would reopen in Malta as soon as a convenient date could be arranged. He added that Malta Tours is paying for the trip.

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McCartney's tribute to 'love of my life'



PHOTOGRAPHS: MARY MCCARTNEY

"All animals to her were like Disney characters and worthy of love and respect. She didn't give a damn what other people thought"

Statement by Sir Paul tells of 'total heartbreak' at the death of his wife

SIR PAUL MCCARTNEY told last night of his "total heartbreak" at the death of his wife, Linda, as he paid his own tribute to the woman he described as "the love of my life".

A statement written with his four children around him at the family farmhouse in East Sussex ended with six kisses to a woman he said was "unique and the world is a better place for having known her".

Sir Paul also disclosed that the couple had deliberately misled even their closest friends about the extent of Lady McCartney's cancer. In public, they had been determined to appear relaxed and confident about her prospects of beating the disease. But yesterday he said that the last two years battling her illness had been "a nightmare".

Sir Paul asked Geoff Baker, his close aide, to release his personal tribute to the media through the Press Association after television crews and journalists agreed to leave the farmhouse at Peasmarch, near Rye.

The statement was typed on

a piece of plain paper, with yesterday's date.

"April 21 1998. Paul McCartney's personal statement on the tragic loss of his wife, Linda.

This is a total heartbreak for my family and I. Linda was, and still is, the love of my life, and the past two years we spent battling her disease have been a nightmare. She never complained and always hoped to be able to conquer it. It was not to be.

Our beautiful children — Heather, Mary, Stella and James — have been an incredible strength during this time, and she lives on in all of them.

The courage she showed to fight for her causes of vegetarianism and animal welfare was unbelievable. How many women can you think of who would singlehandedly take on opponents like the meat and livestock commission, risk being laughed at, and yet succeed?

People who didn't know her well, because she was a very private person, only ever saw the tip of the iceberg. She was

the kindest woman I have ever met, the most innocent.

All animals to her were like Disney characters and worthy of love and respect. She was the toughest woman who didn't give a damn what other people thought. She found it hard to be impressed by the fact that she was Lady McCartney. When asked whether people called her Lady McCartney, she said "Somebody once did — I think."

I am privileged to have been her lover for 30 years, and in all that time, except for one enforced absence, we never spent a single night apart. When people asked why, we would say "What for?"

As a photographer there are few to rival her. Her photographs show an intense honesty, a rare eye for beauty.

As a mother she was the best. We always said that all we wanted for the kids was that they would grow up to have good hearts; and they have.

Our family is so close that her passing has left a huge hole in our lives. We will never get over it, but I think we will

come to accept it.

The tribute she would have liked best would be for people to go vegetarian, which, with the vast variety of foods available these days is much easier than many people think. She got into the food business for one reason only, to save animals from the cruel treatment our society and traditions force upon them.

Anyone less likely to be a business woman I can't think of, yet she worked tirelessly for the rights of animals, and became a food tycoon. When told a rival firm had copied one of her products, all she would say was "Great, now I can retire." She wasn't in it for the money.

In the end, she went quickly with very little discomfort, and surrounded by her loved ones. The kids and I were there when she crossed over. They each were able to tell her how much they loved her.

Finally I said to her: "You're up on your beautiful Appaloosa stallion; it's a fine, spring day, we're riding through the woods. The bluebells are all out, and the sky is clear blue."

had barely got to the end of the sentence, when she closed her eyes, and gently slipped away.

She was unique and the world is a better place for having known her.

Her message of love will live on in our hearts forever.

I love you Linda.

Paul xxx xxx.

Sir Paul has yet to decide where to hold a memorial service for his wife. He is determined to release a new album of her songs the couple were recording in the weeks before her death.

She was also writing the music and script for a cartoon film, *The Wild Prairie*, which is about a modern, sophisticated woman who yearns for the simpler life. Mr Baker, said: "Paul is determined this work will be finished and released because this is Linda's story."

There is also certain to be an exhibition of her photographs with all proceeds going to a charity she supported. It will include forty rolls of film she took of the last days of the Beatles, but never developed.

Aides said it was too soon after Lady McCartney's death

Lady McCartney photographed by her daughter before she left for America

in California last week to say whether her daughter, Mary, 27, would go ahead with her summer wedding. Miss McCartney, who works as a picture researcher at her father's offices in Soho, had told her mother she was marrying a television producer, Alistair Donald. The couple wanted to wed in the Sussex village where the McCartneys spent most of their married life.

Sir Paul has not left their home since returning by pri-

vate plane from California, where his wife died. He had kept her death a secret until after he had managed to have her body cremated and the family had returned home to Britain.

Sir Paul disclosed that he had lain alongside his wife in her last moments and that all four children had been at the bedside. Lady McCartney's ashes are scattered in what was her favourite woodland at the farm.

State schools in Rome will

serve only vegetarian dishes April 30 in honor of the Lady McCartney. "It is important to reflect on the message spread by this woman, who until her death believed in life with joy and determination," Fiorella Farinelli, the city's education commissioner, said.

Thousands of students at the city's elementary and high schools will be served caprese, a dish of tomatoes and mozzarella cheese, rather than the chicken originally on the menu.

Wren wins claim for job snub

BY HELEN JOHNSTONE

A WREN who felt "utterly betrayed" by the Royal Navy after failing to win promotion because she did not go to sea has been awarded nearly £125,000 in compensation for discrimination.

Chief Petty Officer Pauline Teller was passed over for the rank of warrant officer despite being recommended for the post four years running. The Navy had selected instead sea-going ratings of a similar ability to hers.

A tribunal found that the Ministry of Defence had discriminated against her and assessed that injury to her feelings had been "extremely serious". The panel strongly criticised the Navy, saying: "It has refused to acknowledge its

fault and has brazened out the matter to the end. The Royal Navy, as an arm of government, should set an example for others to follow and, if it has fallen in error, it should be willing to accept and acknowledge that error."

CPO Teller joined the Navy in 1972, 18 years before a change in policy allowed women ratings to serve at sea. The tribunal, at Southampton, heard that existing Wrens could volunteer but were also permitted to continue their service on the same terms as before.

CPO Teller told the tribunal that she never volunteered because she had been told that she was eligible to be a warrant officer. She added: "I



Teller was passed over four times for promotion

had no reason to believe that not going to sea would affect my chances of promotion. If I had known, I would have gone."

The ministry was ordered to

pay compensation totalling £124,495 to cover loss of earnings and pension calculated from 1995, when the tribunal found CPO Teller had a 75 per cent chance of being promoted, to July 30, 2009, the date she would have retired as a warrant officer. It includes £20,000 for injury to feelings and an earlier interim award of £3,725 for loss of earnings.

CPO Teller, 42, a radio supervisor at HMS Collingwood near Fareham, Hampshire, had told the tribunal of her disappointment in the Navy. "I placed my complete trust and faith in the Royal Navy and felt utterly betrayed by their rejection of me. To have reached the rank of warrant officer would have meant I would have reached the pinnacle of my career."

ONLY IN THE TIMES

MY STORY

by Christopher Reeve

● With extraordinary honesty, Superman Christopher Reeve has written the story of the riding accident which paralysed him and his battle to survive

● He reveals how at first he was intent on suicide but how the love of his wife gave him the strength to carry on living

● Reeve has written a remarkable and uplifting account of survival against all odds



Start reading it, only in The Times on Saturday

Cable 'led police to power fraud'

BY PAUL WILKINSON

A BUSINESSMAN powered his home and outbuildings for six years by tapping into a street light outside. It was claimed in court yesterday. The illegal connection was discovered only when workmen were called to investigate reports that the lights were faulty, a jury at Leeds Crown Court was told.

When they dug beneath the lamppost outside Ian Tordoff's home they found a 30-amp electrical cable attached by two Jubilee clips and wrapped in a polythene sack.

The connection was described as highly dangerous by Brian Harris, a Yorkshire Electricity engineer. "It could prove lethal to any utility worker who struck it with a shovel during maintenance work," he said.

The cable led to a hedge near by and, from there, about 150 metres into the fuse box at Mr Tordoff's premises. Meadowfield Nurseries at Stanley, near Wakefield.

Mr Tordoff, 43, denies dishonestly using more than £9,000 of electricity between March 1991 and March 1997 and causing damage to Yorkshire Electricity property. He

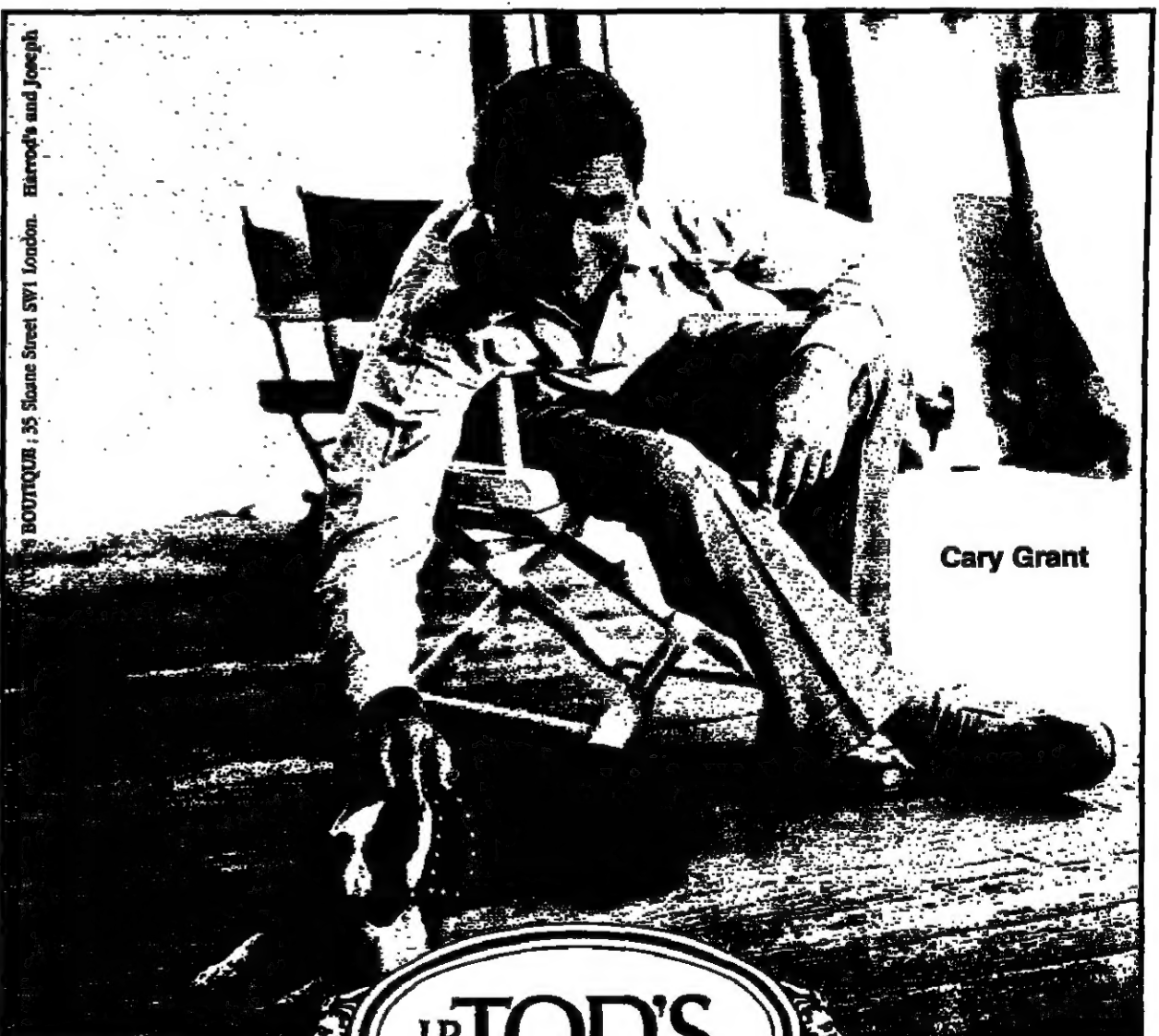
says that his premises were powered by a generator in his garage which ran overnight, charging up a series of batteries beneath the floor.

Yunus Valli, for the prosecution, said that no batteries were found by police who searched the premises. He told the jury that there was no record of the nurseries ever being connected to the mains supply. When police made two night-time checks, they found the premises well-lit, but there was no sound of a generator.

The hearing continues.



Tordoff said to have taken £9,000 of power



Cary Grant

J.P. TOD'S



Murdoch splits from lonely wife of 30 years

By RAYMOND SNOODY AND CAROL MIDDLEY

RUPERT MURDOCH has separated from his wife, Anna, a week before their 31st wedding anniversary.

The short announcement in the *Liz Smith* column of the *New York Post* gave no reason for the decision. It simply said the split was amicable, but painful. "The Murdochs say their situation... leaves them torn, but they are attempting to work out their differences," Ms Smith reported.

Mrs Murdoch, 53, who met her husband when she was a reporter on one of his newspapers in Australia, will remain on the board of The News Corporation, parent company of *The Times*. Mr Murdoch, 67, is chairman and chief executive of the corporation.

Official spokesmen said that no one else was involved and would not comment on what lay behind the rift in what had been seen as a strong marriage. But one friend said: "My belief is that Anna has had enough of him working so hard and she is saying this isn't how I want to spend the rest of my marriage. I think she is trying to get him to slow down."

"She is a devout Roman Catholic, so divorce would be an anathema to her. I think she is merely trying to get Rupert to listen."

A friend of Mrs Murdoch's added: "Rupert is completely devoted to work. If you are dealing with the US, UK, Far East and Australasia, it means you are on the phone all the time. They have always seemed very close and incredibly loving, so this separation may not be for ever."

"Anna is never afraid of standing up to Rupert. They



The couple in the early days of their marriage

have a very equal relationship."

Anna Torv was a trainee reporter on the *Sydney Daily Mirror* when she was told to interview the publisher. They married when she was 23 and he was 37. It was a second marriage for Mr Murdoch, who has a daughter, Prudence, from his first marriage.

The daughter of an Estonian father and Scottish mother, Miss Torv's family moved from Scotland to Australia when she was nine. Mr Murdoch was once quoted as saying of her: "She can cut me off at the knees better than anyone else."

Mrs Murdoch became a novelist in the 1980s, partly, she said, to combat the loneliness of life as a tycoon's wife. The couple's married life has been spread between homes in Los Angeles, New York, London, Aspen and Australia. Her career flourished, but in an interview she gave in 1988, when her second novel, *Family Business*, was published, she said of her writing: "I needed something to do with my time. I have a preoccupied

husband and my children don't need me so much anymore. I do it to fill in the loneliness."

At an age when most men are starting to ease down, Mr Murdoch has, if anything, speeded up. Last month he made an ambitious, but ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to buy three Italian television channels from Silvio Berlusconi, the businessman and politician. This week Mr Murdoch concluded his first deal in Russia — a stake in a telecommunications firm. It is

as if he is running ever faster in order to be able to hand over to his children the world's most extensive media empire. Already the News Corporation's interests include Twentieth Century Fox studios and Fox Television in the United States, four national newspapers there and satellite broadcasting stakes in Britain, India, Hong Kong and Japan. The News Corporation's share price barely moved yesterday, even though the split could ultimately raise doubts over an orderly succession. For some years the plan has been that Mrs Murdoch would, in the event of her husband suffering from illness or accident, become non-executive chairman of The News Corporation to represent the interests of their children, Elisabeth, 28, Lachlan, 26, and James, 24 — all of whom work as executives in the company.

Mr Murdoch was asked last year by an interviewer what he would do with the other 30 days of the month if he were to stand down as chief executive. "It would take a tremendous effort by my wife and kids to throw me out," he said.



In the couple's later years, Anna Murdoch took to writing books to fill her days

Lecturer's widow wins £150,000 on asbestos

By RUSSELL JENKINS

A LECTURER'S widow was awarded £150,000 in an out-of-court settlement, after claiming that his college caused his death by exposing him to asbestos in workshops.

James Lewis, of Darwen, Lancashire, died from the lung condition mesothelioma in 1993, five years after taking early retirement, aged 57, from his post as a lecturer in mechanical engineering at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London. He worked there for 30 years.

The case was funded by Association of University Teachers, which called for the last legal uses of asbestos to end. The union said the case raised concern over how many teachers and students might go on to develop asbestos-related diseases.

Anne Lewis said: "Jim was adamant that the case be pursued as asbestos was in such common use without the public being aware how it could devastate lives." He did not handle asbestos, but was in workshops where it was cut up and made into laboratory components, principally lagging for equipment.

Mystery remains over crash that killed friends

By A TIMES REPORTER

FIVE teenage friends on a farewell night out before going their separate ways died when their Ford Escort spun out of control on a quiet country road and split in two when it was hit by an oncoming car.

All five were killed instantly as the car was ripped apart so fiercely that the back half smashed into a tree at a height of 15 feet.

Police investigators told a coroners court in Leicester it was still a mystery why the driver suddenly lost control in good weather and officers denied the Ford Escort had been illegally welded together from two halves of other cars involved in crashes. PC Neil Holmes of Leicestershire police said the impact was so severe the car split along its natural seam.

The victims were thrown so far from the wreckage police said it was impossible to tell who was driving and the damage was so severe they could not calculate the speed of the car. Two men in the

other car involved were seriously injured and one is still in hospital, the inquest in Hinckley, Leicestershire, was told.

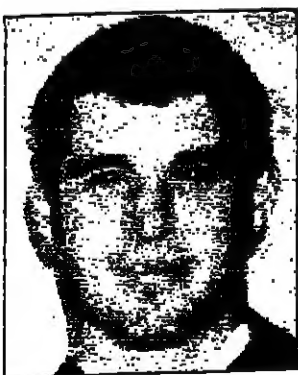
The five who died — Matthew Thompson, 19; Steven Van, 18; Michael Stanforth, 18 and Anthony Smith, 18 — all from the village of Newton Verdon — and William Annan, 18 of Market Bosworth, were schoolfriends. Mr Thompson, the owner of the Escort, was probably the driver, the inquest heard. He had a blood alcohol level of 75mg per 100ml — below the drink-drive limit.

Outside the court the families told how their sons were celebrating the start of their new lives when the accident happened on January 2. William Annan's father, Stuart, said: "It was a celebration for the five of them. And all the families will remain close and remember the boys in our own ways."

"They were in the middle of the social scene," said Mr Annan. "They were never in trouble with drink or drugs — they were a credit to their parents. It is very sad that boys like that had to be picked out."

Home Office pathologist Clive Bouch said that all five would have died almost immediately from severe and multiple injuries. They had suffered broken bones, brain injuries and devastating internal injuries, he said.

The coroner for Rutland and North Leicestershire, Philip Tomlinson, recorded verdicts of accidental death on all five.



Matthew Thompson: setting out on new life

Jet-lagged athlete 'was raped in alley'

By MATTHEW BEARD

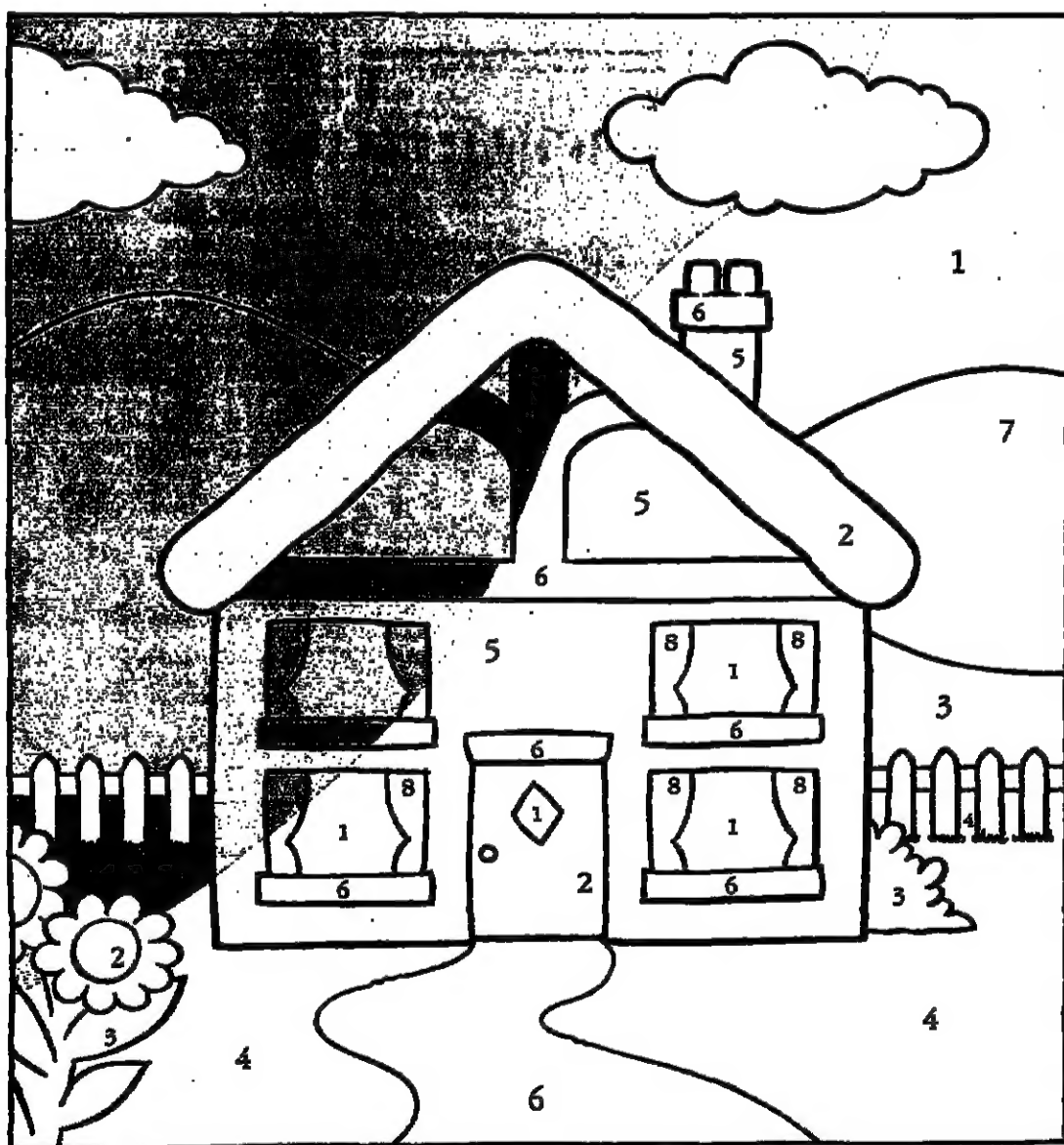
A BRITISH international athlete told a court yesterday that she was raped repeatedly in an alleyway. Two accused men were said to have been captured by members of the public after a chase.

On the night of the alleged assault the runner had returned from a family holiday in Florida and was drinking with her best friend in a bar in Ealing, West London. Peter Testar, for the prosecution, told Isleworth Crown Court that she was jet-lagged and had drunk more than she realised when she left the bar. Outside, she said that she was approached by two men

who had been inside the bar. In evidence she said: "They both took my arms and I was being marched and they were laughing at me. They just forced themselves on me. My head was whacked against the wall and my wrists were held."

Mr Testar said that a male friend saw the two men emerge from the alleyway and helped to detain them in a chase. Jaroslav Kunkel, 31, chase, Jaroslav Pacyna, 23, of Hanwell, deny rape. They had claimed that the woman lured them into the alleyway for sex. Mr Testar said.

The case continues.



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PoWs plan silent protest over Emperor's visit

FORMER British prisoners-of-war of the Japanese yesterday promised a series of public demonstrations during next month's state visit by Emperor Akihito. They will be pressing their demands for compensation and a "meaningful" apology from their former captors.

In the latest move of a long-running campaign, survivors of Second World War labour camps in the Far East plan to make their presence felt at all major engagements during the Emperor's four-day visit to London and Cardiff, although they said that their protests would be peaceful. Yesterday they renewed their call for a meeting with the Emperor after reading a report in *The Times* that he wanted to meet ordinary Britons during his visit.

Veterans' leaders called for public support for their campaign, asking anyone invited to a function associated with the visit to boycott it, or to wear something red in memory of the blood spilt in the labour camps. Arthur Titherington, chairman of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors' Association, said: "When Hirohito visited this country in 1971, the crowds remained

Survivors pledge to step up fight for compensation and apology from captors, reports Alan Hamilton

silent. I hope that is what happens this time. It is nothing personal against Akihito; we are trying to get our message through to the Japanese bureaucracy."

Protesters plan to gather in The Mall as the Emperor drives in an open carriage from his formal welcome on Horse Guards Parade to Buckingham Palace; they intend to turn their backs as he passes, but denied reports that they would whistle *Colonel Bogey*, the wartime soldiers' marching song used as the theme music for the film about the Burma Railway, *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*. "That was one of the worst films ever made about prisoners of war; we certainly will not be whistling that," Mr

Titherington said. "Our protests will be dignified but silent."

Members of his organisation, the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors' Association, which has 9,500 members, plan to hold further demonstrations outside other parts of call during the Emperor's visit, including Westminster Abbey, the Victoria and Albert Museum and Cardiff City Hall. Because The Mall is within a royal park, they are forbidden to carry placards there, but they intend to do so at other venues.

The protests will be joined by the Association of British Civilian Internees, Far East Region, which has 500 members in this country. Other major veterans' organisations, including the Royal British Legion, the Burma Star Association and the Far East Prisoners of War Association, have said that they plan to treat the Emperor's visit with the respect due to a guest of the Queen.

Both the Japanese Embassy and the Foreign Office, anxious for the state visit to be a success, indicated last night that there was virtually no chance of the protesters meeting the Emperor, or of their



Ron Bridge, a child prisoner of the Japanese, wearing his PoW badge and armband in London yesterday

claims for apology and compensation being reopened between the two Governments.

An indication of the desire to smooth over any difficulties was the announcement that the Queen is to award an honorary OBE to Keiko Holmes, a Japanese national living in Croydon, Surrey, who has organised pilgrimages of reconciliation to Japan for former British PoWs.

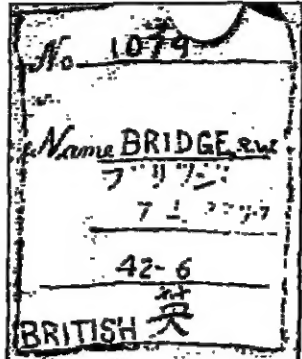
Mrs Holmes said yesterday said she appreciated the feelings of those who planned to protest at the Emperor's visit. "I understand their grief and

their suffering, but at the same time I would like the Emperor to have a pleasant stay," Mrs Holmes said.

Veterans' groups yesterday produced what they claimed was new evidence to support their claims for compensation, which they are pursuing through the Japanese courts. Representatives of 12,000 military and civilian internees of the Japanese are seeking payment of £14,000 per head, instead of the maximum £76 they were given at the end of the war.

Documents found in the

Public Record Office are said to show that British Government had known since 1955 that Japanese and Swiss nationals interned by the Japanese had received compensation of up to £40,000 per head at today's values. Veterans hope to raise the issue with Derek Fatchett, a Foreign Office Minister, on the ground that the 1952 San Francisco peace treaty, which drew the line under all war reparations, has a clause allowing those with poor war compensation to demand parity with the best.



Mr Bridge's identity badge from his camp

Police in Lawrence case 'too late over search'

POLICE found a sword, knives and an air gun at the home of two brothers suspected over the murder of Stephen Lawrence. But the dawn search took place two weeks after the killing, so it was unlikely to find a murder weapon, the officer in charge of the raid told the inquiry into the case yesterday.

Today is the fifth anniversary of the killing of the 18-year-old student, who was stabbed in a racially motivated attack in Eltham, South London. Yesterday, Detective Sergeant David Kirkpatrick said that in hindsight he did not know why the search was not ordered within days.

Police found a knife behind the television in a room where one suspect, Neil Acourt, was in bed. In a padlocked room there was a kukri-type knife, another knife and a jacket with a blood stain. A sword in a scabbard was under the living-room settee, and a shoulder holster for a gun was at the bottom of a cupboard. Police also found an air gun-type revolver and a green shirt with knife cuts.

Floorboards were not lifted, despite the police having information that knives may have been hidden there. Sergeant Kirkpatrick said that he could not be sure if the information had been passed to the search team, but it was unlikely to have been ignored if it had.

He arrested Mr Acourt, who refused to say anything during questioning. Stephen Kamlish, for the Lawrence family, asked if he had tried to protect Mr Acourt. He said: "Certainly not. If Neil Acourt was responsible for that murder he should be locked up. I did everything I could to get him convicted."

The inquiry has been told that, within days of the killing, 39 pieces of information from the public had thrown suspicion on Neil and Jamie Acourt and three other white youths, although arrests were not made for two weeks.

Neil Acourt, 22, Gary Dobson, 22, and Luke Knight, 20, were cleared of killing Lawrence at the Old Bailey in 1996. The case of Jamie Acourt, 31, and David Morris, 21, never came to full trial.

Daughter tells of mother's agonising E coli death



Mary Ann Brown: father died

THE horror of the world's worst *E. coli* 0157 food poisoning outbreak emerged in harrowing detail yesterday as relatives described the agonising deaths of their loved ones.

They were giving evidence on the second day of the fatal accident inquiry into the outbreak, which claimed 21 lives and affected more than 400 people in central Scotland in November 1996.

Many of the victims had attended a pensioners' lunch at Wishaw Old Parish Church on Sunday, November 17 that year, where the steak pies had been supplied by John Barr, the local butcher.

Jessie Rogerson, 71, died in Law Hospital, Carlisle, on November 27 of *E. coli* 0157 poisoning, ten days after the lunch. She had started to feel ill two days after the lunch but

Shirley English reports on allegations of delays by doctors

was diagnosed by her GP as suffering from a stomach upset and haemorrhoids. She was not admitted to hospital until five days later, when news of the outbreak, linked to Mr Barr's butcher's shop, broke in radio and newspaper reports.

In a blizzard, her two daughters and son carried her down the stairs and drove her to the hospital after being told an ambulance would take two hours to arrive.

She died three days later, unable to speak or see. Hardly able to breathe, surviving on oxygen and a plasma drip, she constantly shook her head and body from side to side.

Her daughter, Agnes Ralston, told the inquiry at Motherwell:

"Maybe if my mother had been taken in a bit earlier or treated differently, would she have lived? Why was my mother not taken to a hospital with a renal unit? Why was it so long before they decided to take her into hospital? Why didn't the environmental health officers tell us what was happening? Why were there no ambulances in the middle of an *E. coli* outbreak?"

She added: "If my mother was going to die, she should have died with dignity. My mum died in great pain. If there are lessons to be learnt, let's learn them... I don't want anyone, child or adult, to suffer like my mum suffered." Earlier, Mrs Ralston told the in-

quiry that her mother, previously sprightly, could hardly stand up and was passing blood by the time her family called the local GP, David McBride of Motherwell Health Centre. Despite the winter weather, he told them to bring her into the surgery for an examination.

By the Friday she was vomiting blood clots and was so weak she could only drink tea through a straw lying on her side in bed. But despite the concerns of her family, who were at that point unaware of the outbreak, the GP insisted her illness was "nothing to worry about".

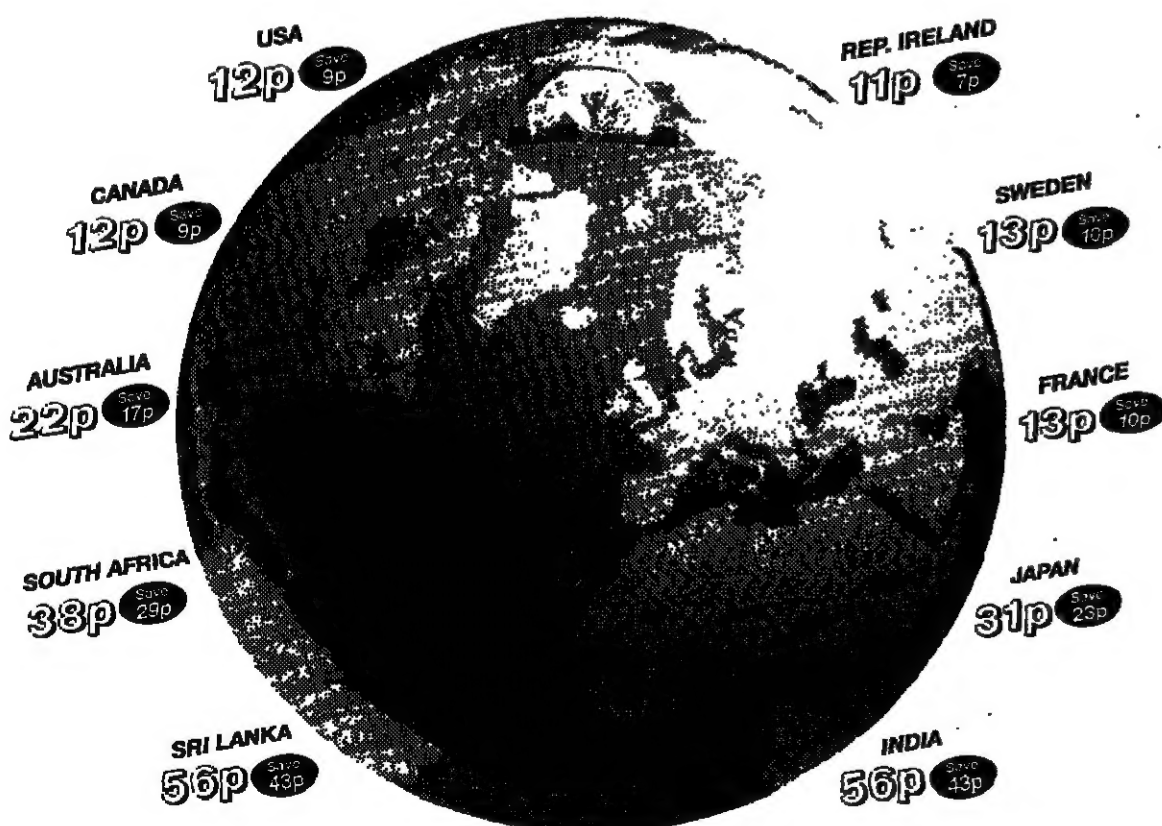
Even as late as Friday night, when all GPs had supposedly been

alerted to the impending outbreak by the health board, he had refused all their entreaties to admit her to hospital and told them to give her fluids and anti-diarrhoea tablets.

Another witness, Mary Ann Brown, 47, of Newarthill, told how her father, Alexander Gardiner, 69, of Wishaw, the youngest to die in the outbreak, also attended the pensioners' Sunday lunch and was treated by Dr McBride. He became ill on the Monday, and after passing blood in the ensuing days, was finally admitted to Law Hospital on the Friday. Mrs Brown, a caterer, was asked by the hospital to take her father's soiled clothing home to wash. She claimed that despite the warnings of the bug, she was not advised to stop all work.

The inquiry continues.

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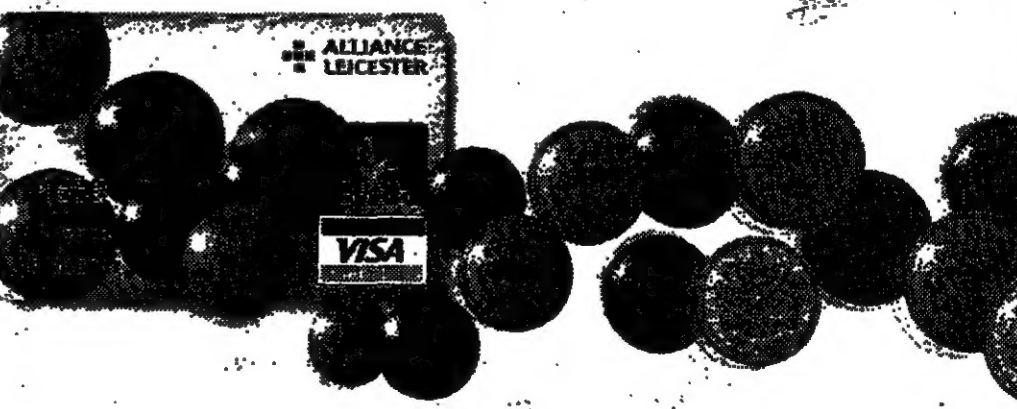
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Judge recalls all Diana crash witnesses

Magistrate hopes mass meeting will thrash out truth about fateful night, Ben Macintyre reports from Paris

THE French magistrate investigating the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, will summon the leading witnesses to Paris in June in a final attempt to hammer out a definitive version of events.

With several aspects of the investigation still unclear or disputed, Hervé Stéphan has decided to bring at least 20 witnesses face to face to offer their sometimes conflicting accounts.

The mass meeting, a rarely used device under French law known as a *confrontation*, enables individuals to hear and, if necessary, challenge one another's evidence in the presence of magistrates. There is no equivalent process in English law.

Nine photographers and a motorcycle driver, who have been placed under formal legal investigation on possible manslaughter charges for pursuing the car carrying the Princess and Dodi Fayed on the night of the accident, are among those expected to be summoned to the Palais de Justice in Paris on June 5 for the day-long meeting, *Le Parisien* newspaper reported.

M Stéphan had originally intended to stage a formal reconstruction of the crash at the tunnel under the Place de l'Alma with witnesses present, but has since abandoned the idea as impractical. "That would have blocked the whole of Paris, which would be unthinkable a few days before the start of the World Cup,"



Stéphan: has scrapped plan for reconstruction

one lawyer involved in the case said.

Earlier in the inquiry the wrecked Mercedes was taken back to the accident scene for a few hours late at night to help investigators to work out how it crashed.

Motorists who were travelling in the opposite direction through the tunnel at the moment of the crash will also be summoned by M Stéphan, along with other witnesses including two who claimed to have seen a car speeding out of the tunnel immediately after the accident.

Trevor Rees-Jones, the Princess's bodyguard and sole survivor of the crash on August 31 last year, had not been called as a witness, Christian Curtil, his lawyer, said yesterday. Mr Rees-Jones, who has

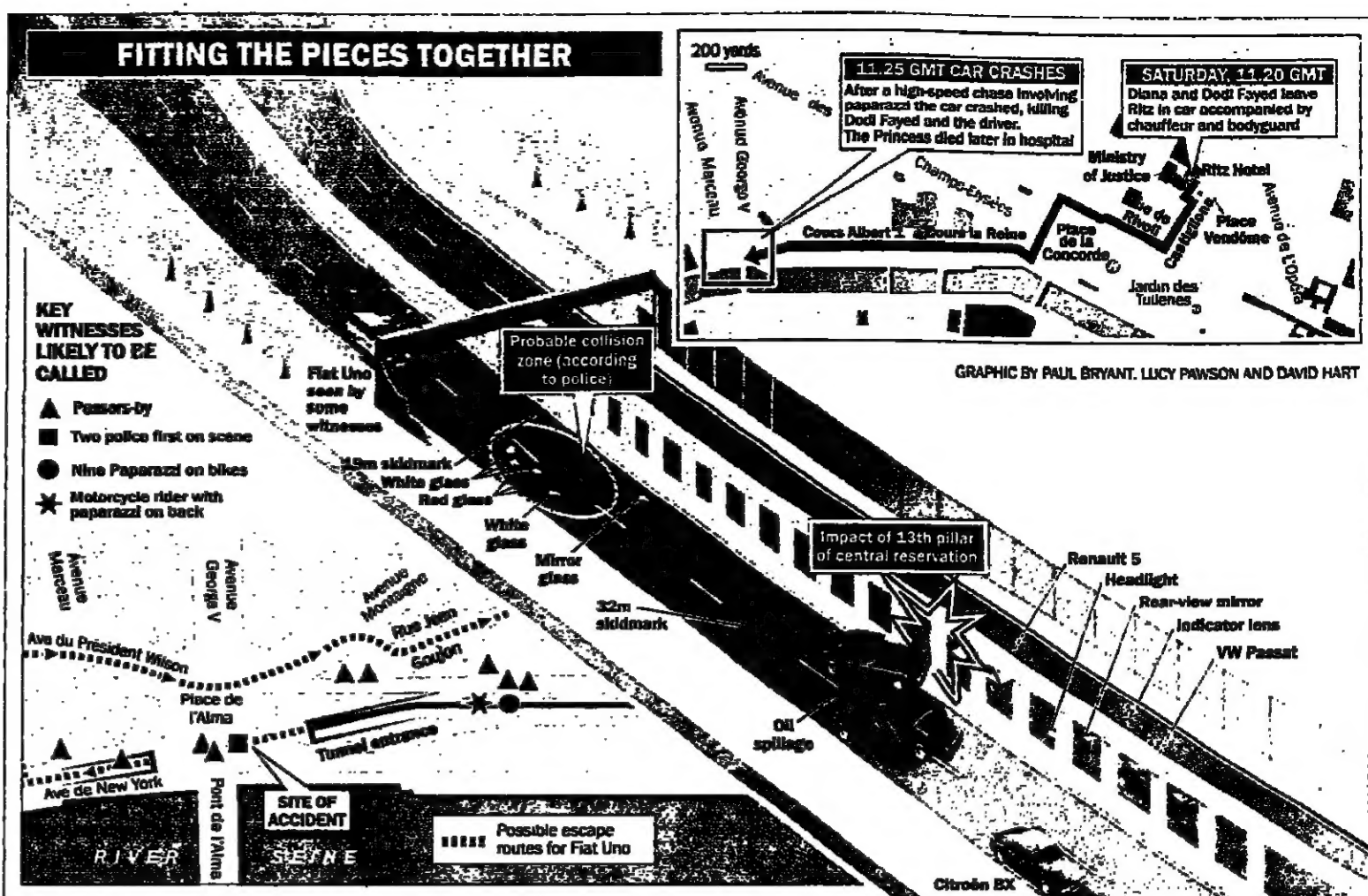
been interviewed by M Stéphan three times, is still suffering from partial amnesia. Mr Rees-Jones announced this week that he was giving up working for Mohamed Al Fayed, Dodi's father and owner of the Ritz.

The mass testimony session will concentrate on the crash itself, but will also attempt to establish a final picture of events before and immediately after the accident.

The photographers, who also face charges of failing to help people in danger under France's "Good Samaritan" law, all claim they were travelling some distance behind the Mercedes carrying the Princess and did not see the crash take place.

The actions of the paparazzi when they came upon the wreck, however, are still under investigation, with contradictory testimony from witnesses, police and the photographers themselves. The two police officers who arrived first on the scene have strongly criticised the behaviour of the paparazzi and are also expected to take part in the confrontation on June 5.

The investigating magistrate will also seek to clarify the mystery of a lone motorcycle, which several witnesses claimed to have seen directly behind the Mercedes before the crash, and also the possible role played by a mysterious white Fiat Uno, which others claim to have seen leaving the tunnel. A massive



police hunt for the missing vehicle has proved fruitless and has been called off.

The investigators also want to clarify what, if any, exchanges took place between the photographers and security officials at the Ritz before

the Mercedes set off with the French chauffeur Henri Paul at the wheel and the Princess, Mr Fayed and Mr Rees-Jones aboard.

In a separate development, M Stéphan has re-examined the Princess's medical dossier,

after claims that her life could have been saved if she had been rushed to hospital immediately, rather than treated at the scene. An emergency medical worker who accompanied the Princess to La Pitié Salpêtrière hospital has been

interviewed by police, and a new assessment of the actions of the emergency team has been requested by M Stéphan. Sources close to the investigation said that the move by investigators did not indicate that any suspicion attached to

the French emergency medical services. They emphasised that the focus on that aspect of the case, like the decision to hold a confrontation among witnesses, merely reflected M Stéphan's determination to explore every avenue of inquiry.

One in the eye for cash machines

BY ROBIN YOUNG

THE first cash machine to dispense money at the blink of an eye goes into use tomorrow. It uses "iris-recognition technology" to identify the user, eliminating the need for personal cashcard numbers.

The machine, the first of its type in the world, is installed at a branch of the Nationwide Building Society in Swindon, Wiltshire. When a customer

inserts their cash card, a camera mounted in the machine scans their eye. If the iris matches the details on the databank, the transaction can proceed.

The makers say the system is totally safe: there is no need to shine a laser beam into the eye. The iris pattern is digitally recorded and fully registered by camera only. Experts say the system is foolproof because each person's iris is

unique and unchanging throughout their life.

The technology was developed by John Daugman from Cambridge University, who used biometrics to encode the pattern of the iris digitally. The camera checks more than 250 features on each iris.

Dr Daugman said yesterday: "The chances of someone else duplicating your match are less than one in a billion. Security systems that rely on

secret knowledge or private possessions such as personal identification numbers and passwords can fall into the wrong hands. The iris recognition system does away with this problem and can be applied to all areas currently using cards, passwords or personal numbers."

He added: "This new technology should ultimately make the plastic cash-card obsolete."

Boy has children's home to himself

BY SIMON DE BRUELLES

A CHILDREN'S home is being kept open at a cost of £2,000 a week for the benefit of one nine-year-old boy. The six-bedroom home was to have closed earlier this year but social workers have been unable to find a foster home for him.

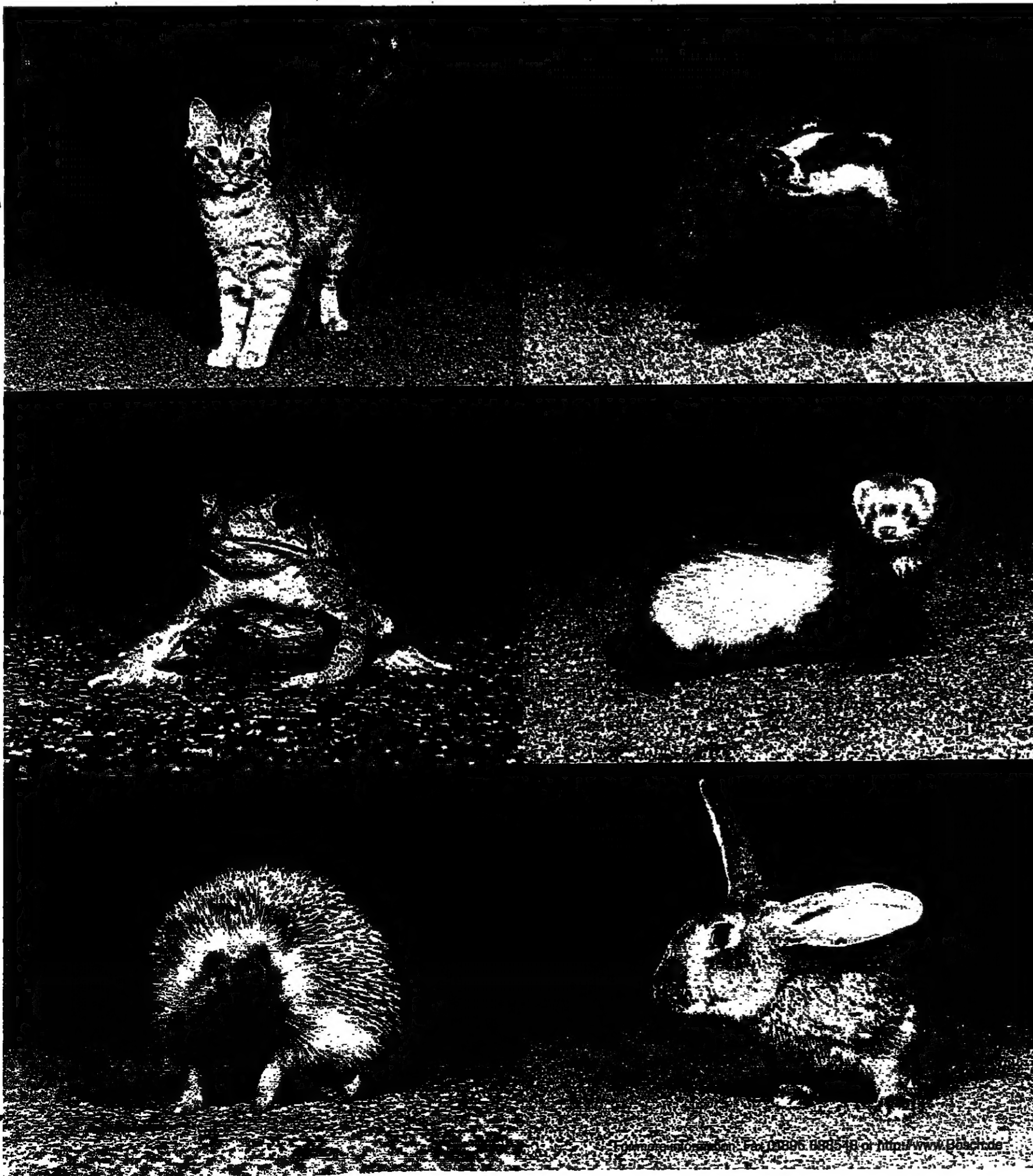
A staff of six is looking after the boy, who is considered uncontrollable and has a history of attacking his carers. Bristol's social services department said yesterday that the boy would stay at the home until foster parents were found.

The home in Stapleton, Bristol, was to have been closed to provide more money for foster care. It was to have become a family daycare centre.

Councillor Arthur Keefe, chairman of the social services committee of Labour-controlled Bristol council, said: "Our policy is to try wherever possible not to place children under ten in children's homes. This is an exceptional situation and we would not expect it to last for any great length of time. We are actively making plans for his future but his welfare has to come before cash savings."

Peter Abraham, a spokesman for the council's Conservative group, said the decision to keep the home open was "a total waste of resources." "I would not have thought that being on his own in a care home is helping matters," he added.

A council spokesman said: "Although the children's home has been closed, it is in temporary, short-term use for a special care project involving a child who has special needs. The child is receiving a level of care that social services considers necessary to meet his needs and the council's obligations."



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Phone calls from public put MI5 on the right track

By MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

MI5 HAS been surprised by the number of significant intelligence leads since it introduced a public telephone line last month, the Home Office said yesterday.

The installation of the number, 0171-930 9000, by the Security Service on March 10, led to a rush of calls. MI5 had set up a special department to deal with calls that were expected from the curious, the cranky and the odd mischief-maker. However, 20 per cent of the 300 to 400 calls received so far, some of them from abroad, have led to potential leads.

A spokesman for the Home Office said the response to the line had been better than expected and that a high proportion of the calls had resulted in "good information and leads".

It took more than two years for MI5 to decide to go ahead with the line and there remained doubts that it would

generate genuinely useful exchanges. Stephen Lander, Director-General of MI5, assigned a comparatively large number of people to take the calls and to follow them up, in the expectation that the novelty of having an official number, in addition to the published box-number address, would attract hundreds of callers.

The telephone line was intended as a new conduit for potential agents to offer their assistance. MI5 hoped that it would encourage people with inside information on terrorism, espionage, organised crime and nuclear weapon proliferation to come forward and offer their services.

A number of callers wanting information about MI5 and others asking about job opportunities were given the box-number address. However, those who sounded as if they had intelligence information to impart were transferred to

an MI5 staff member who spent time checking out their bona fides and their potential for becoming an agent.

Professional computer hackers from the Secret Service were brought in to try to break into the Government's internal secure communications system, which was launched yesterday. Although they failed, the minister in charge of the project, David Clark, admitted that, after computer systems owned by the Pentagon and Nasa were breached, he could not say that the new Intranet was impossible to crack.

The first phase of the Government Secure Intranet will be available to about 400 people, who will be allowed to see documents classed as restricted. The second phase, to come into effect in a few months' time, will widen the scope to 400,000 people and will include confidential documents.

Academy show to celebrate Picasso the potter

THE largest collection of ceramics assembled from Picasso's work as a potter is to go on show in London later this year.

Picasso produced more than 3,500 ceramic pieces, but for years critics ignored this later work because they preferred his paintings.

His son Claude and grandson Bernard were at the Royal Academy of Arts yesterday for the announcement of the three-month show, scheduled to start on September 17. Norman Rosenthal, the exhibition secretary, said many people now accepted that the artist's works after the Second World War were among his best. "They're so tactile you feel as if you're with Picasso," he said.

Pieces have been gathered from private collections around the world, including many held by the heirs of the artist, who died in 1973. About two thirds of the items have never been exhibited before and will not be shown anywhere else in Europe. Claude



Claude, left, and Bernard Picasso, the artist's son and grandson, at the announcement of the show

Picasso, a co-curator of the exhibition, said: "It's very exciting for me to share with you my possessions and my passion for ceramics."

Picasso was a celebrity as a painter by the time he moved from Paris, where he had lived through the Occupation, to the South of France in 1946.

There he added pottery to his many activities, which also included sculpture and book illustration.

Marilyn McCully, a specialist in his work, said: "He would have been 65 in the year after the war and, instead of chasing what would have been a successful career in

doing the same things, it was almost as if he felt a sense of rebirth."

Among the works are many ordinary pieces of pottery that Picasso transformed with his painting. An oval bowl was painted to look like a bull ring, with cheering crowds around the rim and fight

scenes across the bottom. Jugs were painted to resemble birds or figures with their heads in their hands.

Mr Rosenthal predicted "one of the most life-enhancing and thrilling" shows that the academy had staged, which would draw an audience from across Europe.

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Most crime suspects are drug users

By RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

SIX out of ten suspects arrested by police were found to be drug users, according to a Home Office study yesterday. The link between drugs and crime is greater than previously thought, and indicates to the Government that a key part in cutting crime is to get offenders off drugs.

The researchers estimate that heroin and crack addicts make £10,000 to £20,000 a year through crime, and use a third of the proceeds to feed their habit. It is thought that a third of all property crime in England and Wales is drug-driven, costing victims an estimated £2.5 billion. Property crime accounts for 91 per cent of all offences.

The drug-testing study of suspects was the first to be held in the UK. On average, 61 per cent of suspects who agreed to a urine analysis tested positive for at least one illegal drug. In Sunderland, the figure was 49 per cent. Nottingham had 56 per cent, Cambridge 68, Hammersmith 73, and Trafford, Greater Manchester, 78 per cent.

Some 20 per cent tested positive for heroin, and about 10 per cent for crack or cocaine and for amphetamines. Forty-

six per cent had used cannabis, according to the study *Drugs and Crime*. Women were just as likely to test positive as men, if not more so.

The survey by the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University found that 47 per cent of men and women arrested for shoplifting tested positive for heroin and 33 per cent for cocaine. Some 25 per cent of those detained for vehicle offences and 11 per cent of those held for burglary tested positive for heroin. The study dealt with 839 suspects, of whom 622 agreed to be tested.

A second Home Office study suggests that drug users referred to treatment programmes were more likely to stay out of crime than those simply cautioned or taken to court. Six to eight months after being referred to a drug worker, the average user's spending on drugs had fallen from £400 a week to just £70, said Michael Hough of South Bank University.

George Howarth, a junior Home Office Minister, said that a new drug treatment and testing order included in the Crime and Disorder Bill will make offenders seek help.

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هكذا من الأصل

Blunkett sets targets for daily homework

David Charter on how ideas from the private sector are catching hold

MINISTERS want four-year-olds to do 20 minutes of homework a day as part of the crusade to raise standards in the three Rs.

David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, laid down homework guidelines for all ages yesterday, saying state schools should learn from the time children spent "cramming" in independent schools.

Mr Blunkett said a network of after-school clubs being created by the Government would give all children the advantages of those in the independent sector. The clubs would mirror the boarding school system of prep, or supervised homework.

Recent research showed that almost half of children in the top year of state primary school received no homework. Mr Blunkett announced that £200 million of lottery money would be used to fund nearly 10,000 after-school study clubs to give teachers no excuse for not setting every ten-year-old 50 minutes' homework a day.

"If it makes a difference for the children of parents who buy education, there is no reason why it should not make the same difference for those

who cannot afford to," he said.

The Education Secretary said he was keen to learn from independent schools, which also provided more work for children during their holidays. "If something is working well, we will plagiarise it," he said.

The summer literacy and numeracy schools were a state version of private "crammers", he added. The homework guidelines announced yesterday would help schools to draw up their home/school contracts with parents, Mr Blunkett said. He also praised the development of telephone hotlines set up by schools so that parents could find out what their children had been set for homework.

He added: "Many parents are unsure, particularly at primary level, whether children should normally expect to be set homework at all. We have no power or intention to dictate in detail to parents what they do. What we can do is to indicate to people what is working and ask them to take on the responsibility that is rightly theirs."

The guidelines would give teachers and parents "sensible and realistic benchmarks on the amount of homework different age groups at primary and secondary schools might be expected to do".

He emphasised that, particularly for the youngest children, the Government was not

suggesting formal homework. For four and five-year-olds, activities might largely consist of parents reading with their children and helping them to count for 20 minutes a night.

The Incorporated Association of Prep Schools praised the Government's intentions but said that homework was more about quality than quantity.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said: "Homework is an important part of the learning process. Every child should have some at some time. But how much and when must be a matter of professional judgment."

Mr Blunkett said he did not want to spread misery among the nation's children. "All across the country, I can envisage little lads sitting on walls, swinging their feet, saying as I walk by: 'You're a miserable so and so. Mr Blunkett. More homework and fewer chips.'"

"But I'm not a miserable so-and-so. We are in favour of homework, but we are in favour of homework that is rewarding, enjoyable and fun."

20 MINUTES FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

PRIMARY SCHOOL	
Age	Time
4	20 minutes (includes 10 minutes' reading)
5 and 6	30 minutes (includes 10 minutes' reading)
7 and 8	40 minutes (includes 20 minutes' reading)
9 and 10	50 minutes (includes 20 minutes' reading)
SECONDARY SCHOOL	
11 and 12	45-90 minutes
13	60-120 minutes
14 and 15	90-150 minutes

Bullying drives young to suicide

By Peter Foster and Agnes Bell

CHILDREN who are bullied at school are six times more likely to consider or try suicide than their classmates, a survey has revealed.

The figures prompted David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, to announce yesterday new measures to deal with bullying, which can blight victims' lives long after they have left school.

Mr Blunkett, speaking at a London conference on bullying, said the Department of Education was making a video that would feature celebrities including Frank Bruno and Harrison Ford talking about how they were bullied at school.

He added that guidelines to schools on bullying were being revised and that a school's policy on bullying could become a formal component of Ofsted inspections. "People who feel friendless, and

whose self-esteem is damaged, just need someone to stand by them, whether it is a teacher, a friend, or a volunteer. We all have to play a part. It is all about listening and responding," Mr Blunkett said.

The lottery-funded survey by the children's charity Kidscape studied more than 1,000 adults using a questionnaire devised by a behavioural psychologist. It found that bullying had a long-term impact on victims who were more likely to leave school early, develop depression and social problems, and opt out of higher education.

One respondent wrote to Kidscape: "I'm 34, self-employed, married with two children. I have an adoring husband, beautiful children, a job I love and a nice home. Yet there is always this lingering fear that I don't deserve my home, that my

husband and children don't love me, that my friends are only nice to me to my face because they want something from me... This is the legacy I have inherited from bullying."

Forty-six per cent of those who were bullied said they had seriously contemplated suicide, compared with less than 10 per cent of people who were not bullied. A man of 35, told how, after a particularly bad day of bullying, he took a rope into some woods: "I managed to secure the rope and put it around my neck and jump. I blacked out... but I came to on the ground and realised that the rope had untied itself. I never told anyone about it and felt a failure because I couldn't even manage to kill myself properly."

Leading article, page 19

حكاية من الاجل



Regal statues of the Virtues reappear, above, after seven years hidden behind London's most familiar tower of scaffolding. Sir George Gilbert Scott's orate Albert Memorial was first diagnosed as having potentially fatal rot in 1983 (Alan Hamilton writes). Now, after attention to its iron skeleton and a decent facelift, it will emerge from its cladding early next month at the end of an £11.2 million renovation that has come in £2.8 million

Albert ready to face the world again

under budget and a year ahead of schedule. Victoria's tastefully dubious monument to her beloved Albert, who died from typhoid at the age of 42, was unveiled in 1872 and immediately began to deteriorate from the

weather, polluted air and dead pigeons blocking its rainwater gutters. It has not been fully restored to its original state, merely preserved from further decay. Nonetheless, the work has involved the repair of more than 1,000 square feet of mosaics and the regilding of major features, including the massive seated statue of Albert himself. By October, all the scaffolding and polythene sheeting should have been removed.

Solicitors in trouble increase, but claims are down

By Frances Gibb
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

THE number of dishonest firms of solicitors prompting an intervention or takeover by the Law Society increased from 75 to 86 last year, according to statistics released yesterday.

The monitoring and investigations unit of the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors inspected 566 law firms in 1997, of which 43 per cent were found to be in significant breach of the accounts rules. That led to the 86 interventions. The office's report to the Law Society says the visits were made on the basis of information or intelligence received.

Of the 86 firms where the Law Society had to appoint another firm to take over the running of the practice, 76 were sole practitioners and the rest were two-partner firms.

The number of applications for compensation by aggrieved clients — 1,074 — and the amount paid out — £10.75 million — fell by more than 15 per cent from 1996. The report says that, although no new forms of dishonesty were uncovered in 1997, there remain risks to solicitors and to the probity of the profession from advance fee fraud, banking investment fraud and money laundering.

"Indeed, evidence suggests fraudsters are becoming more sophisticated," it says. "During the year the fraud intelligence office circulated a yellow-card warning about banking instrument fraud to every solicitor in the roll. Solicitors need to be alert to being innocently involved in these types of schemes."

Dave McNeill, spokesman for the Law Society, said: "The message is generally good news but there is no room for complacency."

The theme of this year's Local Law Society Challenge Fund in England and Wales is improving solicitors' public image. Prize money for the best ideas totals £24,000.

Crime ts are users

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

six per cent more than last year, according to a survey by the British Crime Survey. Drives and cars were just as popular as ever.

The survey of Criminology at the University of Cambridge, which is carried out annually, found that the percentage of people who had been arrested for a crime in the last year had risen from 1.5 per cent to 1.7 per cent.

The survey also found that the percentage of people who had been victims of a crime in the last year had risen from 1.5 per cent to 1.7 per cent. The survey also found that the percentage of people who had been victims of a crime in the last year had risen from 1.5 per cent to 1.7 per cent.

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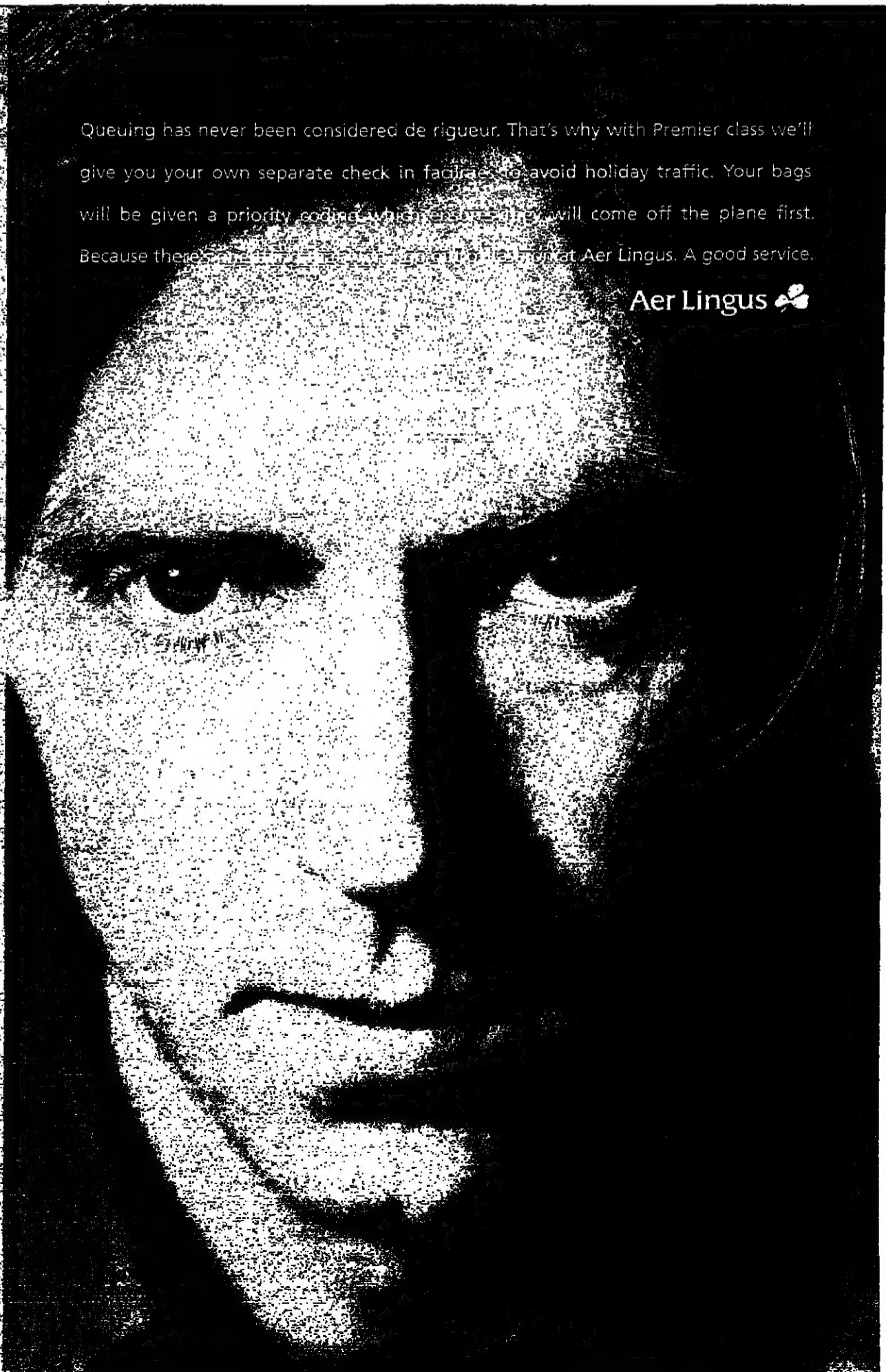
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Union funding for Labour 'has dropped to 30%'

By Valerie Elliott, Whitehall Editor

LABOUR'S reliance on trade unions for funding is in rapid decline, having fallen to 30 per cent of the party's income this year.

David Pitt-Watson, Labour's director of finance, said yesterday that total income for the party this year was forecast at £21 million, of which £6.3 million would come from the unions. Three years ago union money represented nearly half of the party's income, and 30 years ago it was 80 per cent.

Figures produced by the party also showed that the trade union contribution to Labour's election campaign last year was £9.6 million.

The efforts by the Labour Party to move away from financial dependency on the unions were set out in evidence yesterday to the Neill inquiry into the future of party political funding.

The waning influence of the

unions on the direction of policy is clearly accepted by their leaders and was reflected this week when they backed away from a confrontation with Tony Blair and employers over the return of union power in the workplace. A meeting of the TUC general council indicated that the unions were ready to accept a minimum threshold in ballots on union recognition.

A breakdown of the projected income for the party this year was set out in evidence by Tom Sawyer, Labour's general secretary. He said that 40 per cent came from small donations mainly from party members, 30 per cent from the trade unions, 20 per cent from large donors, and 10 per cent from other activities, such as the sale of policy documents.

However, some members of the Neill committee doubted the apparent loss of union influence over the party. There

was concern that while Labour proposed a £15 million spending limit for parties on general elections it also favoured allowing other organisations such as unions to spend up to £1.5 million on campaigning during elections.

The Tory former minister John MacGregor claimed that at last year's election the unions spent more than £7 million on campaigning to help the Labour Party. "That does seem to be a fairly obvious loophole," he said. There was also scepticism about Labour's proposal to cap the election spending of political parties. Lord Neill of Bladen asked what sanctions should be imposed on parties that breached the rules.

Labour told the committee that parties found to have spent more than the limit during a general election should face a five-year ban on party political broadcasts.



Beckett to close blind trust

By Valerie Elliott

MARGARET BECKETT, President of the Board of Trade, is about to close the blind trust that funds her office after months of criticism of Labour's use of secret channels for political donations.

The decision was confirmed at Westminster yesterday by Mrs Beckett's husband, Leo Beckett, who is her parliamentary assistant. "It is being wound down and will be closed within a few weeks," he said.

Her blind trust was set up two years before the general election to help her to prepare Labour policies and to increase her effectiveness in opposing the Tory Government. At the time of the election five people worked for her. Two have moved with her into government, two remain at her Commons office, and one has left her employment. Mr Beckett declined to say how much had been raised.

At yesterday's hearing of the Neill inquiry into the future of political funding, Tom Sawyer, Labour's general secretary, was challenged about his party's position on blind trusts. The Tory former minister John MacGregor said: "On blind trusts, you advocate phasing them out. Can I ask what that means? I mean why don't you end them altogether?"

Mr Sawyer replied: "It actually means stop them."

A Labour spokesman later admitted there may still remain one or two trusts but added: "Regardless of any blind trusts that exist at the moment, if Labour's proposals were implemented they would be abolished."

Several ministers benefited from blind trusts in opposition, including Tony Blair. They were set up so that donors could contribute to the party confidentially to avoid raising suspicion that they were trying to buy influence, but the Prime Minister and the Labour Party have since accepted that they should be banned in future.

London facing annual elections

By James Landale

THE London boroughs could hold elections every year for the first time since the turn of the century under reforms planned by the Government.

Labour hopes that making London councillors face the electorate more often than every four years will prevent the kind of corruption scandal that many boroughs have suffered. But election experts have given warning that the change could lead to voter fatigue and lower turnouts.

The plan will be adopted only if voters back the plans for a London mayor and assembly in the referendum on May 7. A third of seats in each of London's 32 boroughs would come up for election every year, with elections for the capital's new mayor and 25-member assembly taking place on the fourth year. The way in which the seats would be divided up for the elections would mean that most Londoners would be able to vote annually.

The change would bring London into line with other local authorities that hold annual elections: the metropolitan districts, about a third of the shire districts and most of the unitary authorities.

The move was announced as Labour launched its campaign for the local elections on May 7. Labour holds 56 per cent of the seats being fought and controls 93 of the 166 town halls where elections are being held. But John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, said: "For Labour, complacency is the greatest enemy. It is no good Labour voters relying on the fact that they now have a Labour Government and a Labour council. If they don't vote on May 7, they may find that a Tory or Liberal Democrat gets elected."

IN PARLIAMENT

TODAY in the Commons: from 9.30am, backbench debates. From 2.30pm, Welsh questions; Prime Minister's Questions; Northern Ireland Elections Bill, all stages, and related orders; debate on secondary schools in Whitehall. In the Lords: debate on strategic defence review; treatment of vulnerable witnesses; Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) (Amendment) Bill, third reading; Northern Ireland orders.

Empty slogans leave Cook on shaky ground

POLITICIANS are seldom less convincing than when they try to justify themselves in terms of some grand theory. The anniversary of Labour's election victory is being marked by an orgy of self-justification, starting this morning with Robin Cook's address to the Social Market Foundation. This marks not only a relaunch of his own recently battered career but is also an unusually personal affirmation by Mr Cook of the central tenet of Blairism via a discourse on the principles of the Third Way.

As outlined by Mr Cook, these principles amount to little more than vacuous platitudes: strong communities are the best environment for individual freedoms and opportunities; economic efficiency is best secured by inclusive societies which develop the talents of all their members; social and economic progress is best secured through open politics; responsibility and rights are equal parts of citizenship; in the modern world countries succeed through partnership and co-operation, not isolation and confrontation; and constant modernisation is the only basis on which policy can remain relevant in a changing world. Hallelujah. That tells us nothing. What democratic politician could disagree with such clichés. The Telenovellas might even find them bland.

The Third Way is an interesting idea, an attempt to move beyond both post-war collectivism and the free-market individualism of the 1980s (although the latter was more preached than practised). It is really about changing the role of the State, from big spender to partner with the private and voluntary sectors, and from owner to regulator and inspector. It is about active rather than bigger government, or, rather, one which does not have to raise taxes.

Mr Cook is on stronger ground when he talks about what the Government has done, and is intending to do. And, characteristically of this government, the substance is more convincing than the image, the detail than the glossy packaging. Ministers have launched several important initiatives in education,

health and youth justice, albeit building on what the Tories did. Moreover, making the Bank of England responsible for setting interest rates has changed the whole context of monetary policy. The Government has also been more radical than expected on constitutional reform, moving Britain towards both a written and a quasi-federal constitution. Any administration that is seriously developing proposals for a more democratic second chamber can hardly be dismissed as conservative.

Of course, there are many loose ends. Relations between the devolved assemblies and the central government contain many inherent tensions and ambiguities. The developing pattern of new electoral systems is, perhaps inevitably, a hotch-potch. The Blairite inner circle also sometimes appears to be paying lip service to decentralisation while being reluctant to surrender real power — and the

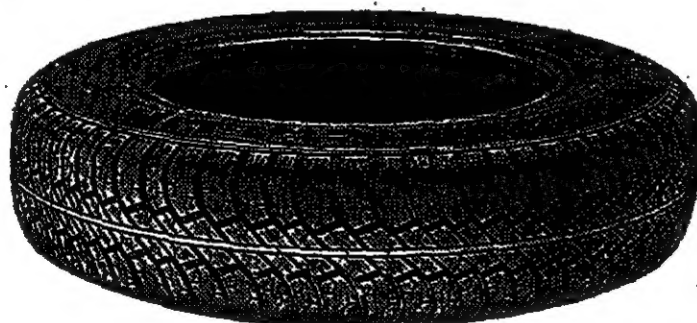
RIDDELL ON POLITICS

differing views and decisions that inevitably implies.

There are questions too about the social agenda. How far will it be possible to improve standards in schools by central direction and inspection? Are parental choice and competition being neglected? Will pouring money in to reduce hospital waiting lists really address the underlying problems of the NHS or will it distort priorities? And is not there bound to be an increased role for the private sector in health and in any really substantial welfare reform? Ministers have so far skirted over these questions, but they are central to defining what the Third Way means and determining whether the current array of policies are intellectually coherent. Mr Cook and his colleagues need to discuss these questions if the Third Way is to be any more than a fashionable slogan, and seminar topic, for post-modernist policy wonks and pundits.

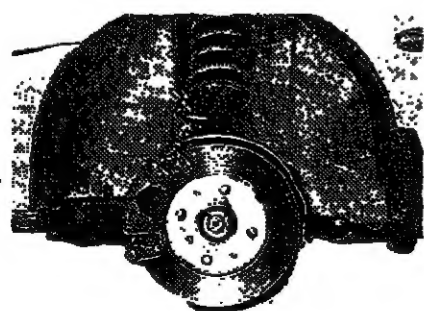
PETER RIDDELL

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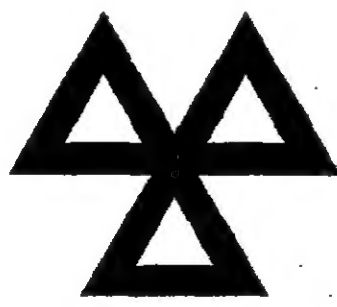


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Netanyahu will join Arafat at London summit

FROM ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT, IN TEL AVIV

The idea for a summit in London or another leading EU capital had been under discussion in senior diplomat-

Mr Netanyahu praised the Prime Minister's role as a peacemaker, which has underlined his enhanced stature

He said that he had first been moved by the Middle East situation after seeing the Oscar-winning *Schindler's List*, Steven Spielberg's film about the Holocaust.

A high-contrast, black and white photograph showing a large crowd of people gathered in front of a building. A banner is held across the crowd, and two cars are visible in the foreground. The image is grainy and has a high level of contrast, with many areas being either pure black or pure white. The banner in the center of the crowd contains text that is partially legible. The building in the background has a classical architectural style with columns. Two cars are parked in the foreground, one on the left and one on the right. The overall scene suggests a large public gathering or protest.

Iraqis use a Baghdad funeral for two children to attack UN sanctions, blamed for the death of hundreds of young people. Letters, page 17

Blair tact is tested in euro bank feud

EU, reports Charles

Bremner from Luxembourg

EU posts, are ready for a fight to keep their man in the running. "Losing this would be like losing the World Cup to the Germans," Gerrit Zalm, the Dutch Finance Minister, said. "It would be rather strange, if there is a massive majority in favour of one candidate, that he would be blown off the table."

Anti-peace party invited to join Israel coalition

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

In addition to wanting to exile as many as possible of the million Israeli Arabs and 2.4 million Palestinians from Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the party — led by the eccentric former general, Rechavam Zeevi — also opposes continuation of the 1993

Mr Netanyahu, who a month ago appointed a hard-line Jewish settler as director-general of his private office, said: "I have spoken with



Zeevi: expecting to be given Cabinet post



Zeevi: expecting to be given Cabinet post

Istanbul mayor jailed for 'inflaming hatred'

FROM ANDREW FINKEL IN ISTANBUL

Although Erdogan remains free on appeal, if yesterday's verdict is upheld then he will be banned in perpetuity from holding elected office. This

students protesting at an attempt to ban students with religious headscarves from attending university courses.

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Britons ride to rescue of ailing Lippizaners

FROM TOM WALKER IN VUCJAK

WORKERS at a Bosnian stud yesterday thanked British soldiers in Nato's Stabilisation Force for highlighting the plight of their Lippizaner horses, some of which have been sold to local farmers to pull carts while others have been eaten.

The stud at Vucjak, 25 miles east of Banja Luka, was once a jewel of the Yugoslav state. Patronised by apparitions of Marshal Tito's Communist hierarchy, it was one of three European breeding centres for the famous white horses, best known for their dancing at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna.

But, amid the chaos of Yugoslavia's collapse, Vucjak found itself marooned in the bloody killing fields of Bosnia. Its state funding disappeared and the stud became a backwater of the penniless Republika Srpska, Bosnia's Serb territory. A decade after its horses were being transported to exhibitions around the world, much of the local population had forgotten Vucjak even existed.

"We couldn't believe it when we found the place," said Captain Johnny Irish, a British army vet. He and Major Chris Kinsville-Heyne, both based in Banja Luka, made several visits to the dilapidated stud, and through the Lippizaner Society of Great Britain have helped the International League for the Protection of Horses to launch a



£100,000 appeal to save Vucjak.

"The world hasn't abandoned us after all," said Vucjak's director, Radica Sendic. "When I first came here last July the situation was horrible, the horses were starving, their ribs were visible. I thought it was hopeless."

Food paid for by a Lippizaner foundation in The Netherlands has helped the horses to survive the winter. And in the spring sunshine yesterday there was a new air of optimism among the crumbling stables.

Danka Stasjuk, one of a handful of devotees who have worked unpaid at Vucjak for the past five years, led out the stallion Pluto Bregava to perform for the British officers.

The sagging roofs, broken windows and rusting machinery made a surreal backdrop as Bregava, with a flawless lineage dating back to the heyday of the Habsburg Empire, pranced in a wide circle.

"You can't imagine how miserable it's been here after what we were once used to,"

said Mr Stasjuk. "It was absolute desperation."

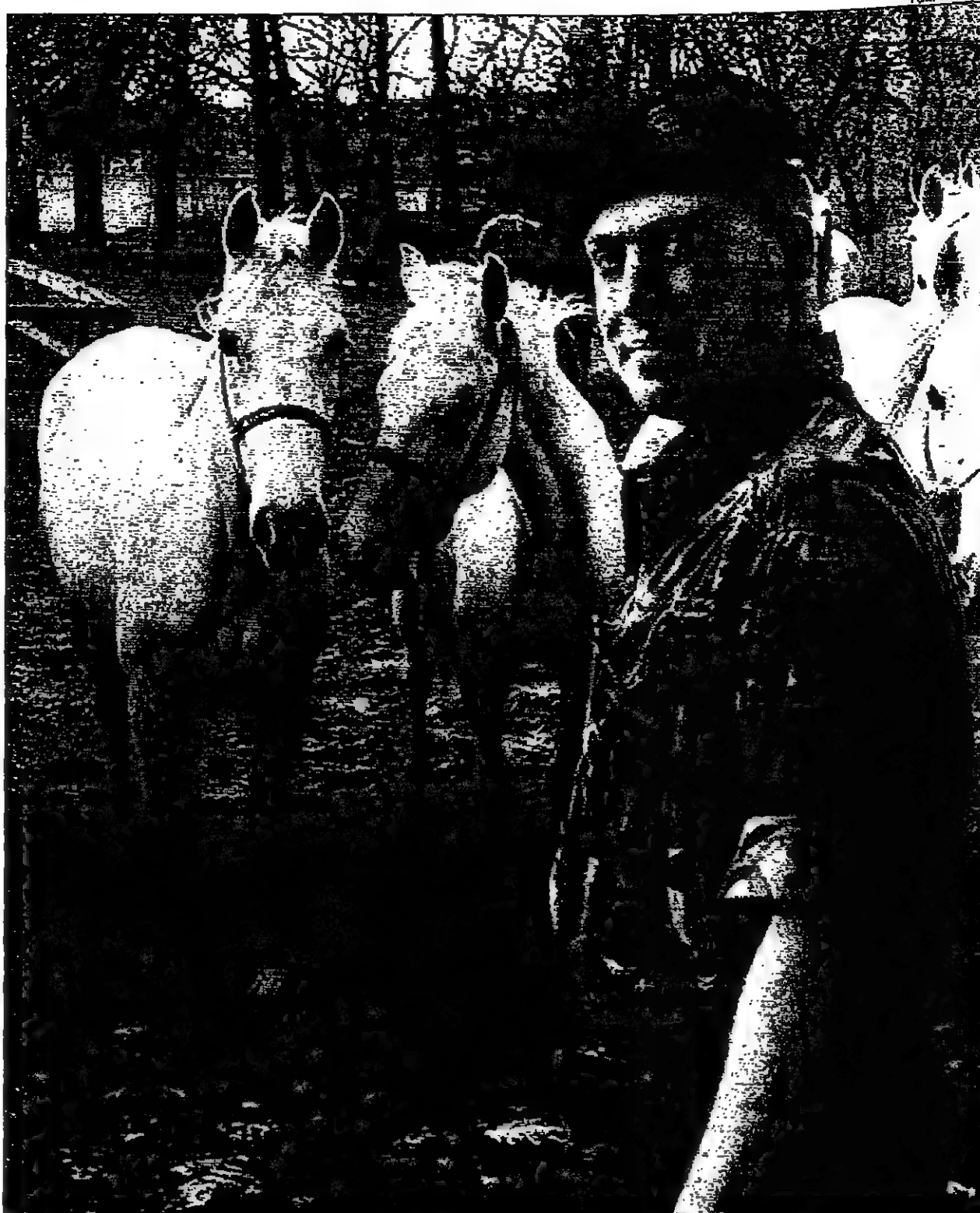
Sixty horses remain from a prewar stock of 200, among them ten stallions and 20 brood mares. The minimum annual cost of feeding and grooming a Lippizaner at Vucjak was £400. With wartime salaries in Republika Srpska running at about £10 a month, the stud rapidly became untenable. Horses were mostly sold to local farmers, their prices rising in the last year to around £150.

"We were told that they were being used as working animals, but you could tell that wasn't always the truth," said Major Kinsville-Heyne. "I'm afraid some went to the slaughterhouse." There were also 1,200 head of cattle at Vucjak before the war, all of which have been eaten.

The publicity surrounding the stud has meant that the officers are now inundated by calls from the media and horse lovers the world over.

Vucjak faces further problems as its ownership is disputed by the former Yugoslav states, a legal tangle that prevents it making millions from exporting Lippizaners. But the immediate popularity of the British appeal should at least ensure the stud's current stock is safe.

"I'm very optimistic now, after the British initiative," said Mrs Sendic. "Once Vucjak is rehabilitated, the soldiers are welcome to as many free riding lessons as they like."



Captain Johnny Irish, a British army vet, at the Vucjak stud in Bosnia with some of the Lippizaner horses whose plight he has helped to highlight. During the civil war some were sold to pull carts; others were eaten

French put the stopper on fake claret

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

BORDEAUX wine-makers have vowed to scupper an illegal trade in "counterfeit claret" in South-East Asia that is undermining the reputation of the celebrated French wine and leaving a nasty taste in the mouths of Asian wine buffs.

According to the Interprofessional Council of Bordeaux Wines (CIVB), up to 15 per cent of the *grands crus* Bordeaux wines on sale in South-East Asia are actually inferior wines with fraudulent labels.

The total value of Bordeaux wine exports grew last year by a record-breaking 41 per cent, with the highest increase in the financial crisis in the region. Exports to Japan rose by 67 per cent, while Taiwan's demand climbed by 664 per cent.

This week the CIVB announced it would spend Fr1. million (£100,000) in the first stage of a programme to combat the forgeries. Every two months Bordeaux wine experts will carry out spot checks on wine-sellers, beginning in Shanghai and Beijing.

Cognac producers this week agreed to join forces with Bordeaux wine-makers against the traffickers.

"The most notorious counterfeit consists of offering for sale a wine with an expensive label whose contents have nothing to do with what is stated on the label," Philippe Castéja, president of the CIVB, said.

Much of the counterfeit claret is not even French, according to experts, but locally produced or cheaply imported wine.

In 1997, some 12.7 per cent of Bordeaux exports went to Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea, but those countries accounted for more than 22 per cent of the total value of the region's wine exports.

Britain imported more than 37 million litres of Bordeaux last year, an increase of 16 per cent, and the volume imported by the US increased by 22 per cent.

Cook claims success for strategy of dialogue

BY MICHAEL EVANS DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

BRITAIN has given up the old formula of "rowing and kowtowing" to try to improve human rights in the world, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said yesterday.

Publishing a report into the first year of his new ethical foreign policy, he said that he had found a third way of dealing with countries with poor human rights records which was based on partnership.

However, at a press conference to launch the report, Mr Cook had to answer the charge that he had, in fact, gained a reputation for "hectoring" other people — such as during his controversial trip to Israel last month.

The Foreign Secretary admitted that on occasions it was still necessary to "talk tough". He said there

were times when it was right to "condemn publicly, loudly and firmly", but his policy on human rights was to work with the countries involved and not to "hector" them. He added: "I would certainly robustly resist the idea that the bulk of my activity has been going round and hectoring people."

The policy on human rights in the past wavered between "rowing and kowtowing", he said. But the "third way", he said, was to set up a proper dialogue and to work with the countries to eliminate human rights abuses.

The Foreign Office report mentioned 60 countries, including India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and highlighted the "practical partnerships" that have now been developed, including a dialogue on human rights

with China, new co-operation with Indonesia and a partnership on child welfare with the Philippines.

"In the past year I have criss-crossed the globe and wherever I am human rights has been high on my agenda," Mr Cook said. "There will

I have criss-crossed the globe and wherever I am human rights are high on my agenda

be those who say we should condemn abuse more loudly and pick fights rather than promote partnership... but we want to make a change, not just a point."

He added: "The focus of our strategy is not to trumpet condemnation. The focus of our strategy is to

make real, practical improvements."

However, he condemned the announcement by the five political parties in Nigeria that they had endorsed a single candidate, General Sani Abacha — the country's military ruler — for the presidential elections due to be held in August. Mr Cook expected the Commonwealth ministerial action group to meet soon to decide whether to impose sanctions on Nigeria.

Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, also told the press conference that it was vital to develop a new human rights agenda that ensured basic rights "not just for the rich and famous but also for the poor and needy". Having a full belly was as important a right as being able to speak freely, she said.

Mr Cook hailed as one of his

achievements in his first year of office the revised guidelines for arms sales under which exports are prohibited if there is a "clearly definable" risk that they might be used for internal repression.

One of the earliest tests of his ethical foreign policy was in dealing with arms sales to Indonesia. He declared last year that he would not be in a position to cancel arms contracts already agreed with the previous Tory Government. Yesterday, an Indonesian Air Force spokesman said that the delivery of 16 British-made Hawk 200 jet fighters would begin next March.

First Marshal Mirzayabhan Asfha told a press conference in Jakarta that the 16 planes would be delivered in eight stages.

The contract signed with the Indonesian Government also includes 100 armoured personnel carriers.



Abacha: unopposed in presidential elections

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Germany's terrorists aim to swap guns for amnesty

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

GERMANY'S most dangerous ultra-left terrorists have announced they are giving up the urban guerrilla struggle against the state — but at least one top detective refused to believe it.

He is Horst Herold, the retired head of the Federal Criminal Office, who led the fight against the so-called Red Army Faction (RAF) in the 1970s and 1980s. "I cannot believe these people would have made such an announcement on Hitler's birthday (April 20)."

German police nonetheless confirmed yesterday that the letter — with its characteristic star and machinegun logo — handed to a news agency is genuine. The letter admitted that the Red Army Faction was "now history".

The problem is that the RAF — successor to the murderous Baader-Meinhof gang which terrorised Germany in the 1970s — is no longer a monolithic organisation. There are convicted terrorists still sitting in prison, some like Irmgard Möller have served their terms, some are on the run, others have renounced terrorism and are living freely and openly.

Within this community there has been an active if somewhat surreal debate about the future of the movement. Jailed hardliners such as Brigitte Mohnhaupt, Christian Klar and Adelheid Schulz have always been against dissolving the group. Others believe the group should be kept alive but should formally renounce violence.

The RAF letter may therefore speak only for a segment of the terrorist or post-terrorist community. The reasoning of the RAF letter writers seems to



Irmgard Möller, jailed as terrorist, and Christian Klar, who opposed disbanding the murderous group

be that a formal dissolution of the group would allow a new Social Democratic-Green government to announce an amnesty for all those connected with the terrorist movement. That in turn would open the way for the RAF to mould themselves into a kind of Sinn Féin, an explicitly political organisation. The key sentence in the eight-page letter was: "It was a strategic error not to build up a socio-political organisation alongside the illegal, armed one."

There is no other statement of regret from the movement which claimed more than 50 lives of Germans — including some of the country's leading business personalities — and US army personnel. They borrowed their tactics from Latin American urban guerrillas using bombs, kidnapping and assassinations in an attempt to induce the German Government to make more use of its police machinery.

At a certain point ran the terrorist logic, Germans would see the true face of their state — a democratic order masking a coercive regime.

That would then lead to pressure for change.

Nothing of the kind happened. The romantic image peddled by the terrorists briefly allowed the group to hide among students and squatters but they were always despised by German workers. The brutality of the murders soon cut away even passive support for the terrorists. The latest was in 1990, but the game was up for the RAF: German unification exposed how dependent the terrorists had been on the shelter provided by the Stasi secret police of the East German Communist regime.

Some of the later killings attributed to the RAF — their last victim was Detlev Rohwedder, head of the privatisation agency for eastern Germany — may actually have been carried out by former Stasi hit men.

The RAF's ambition to become a legitimate political player now finds some sympathy within the Green Party. Indeed Felix Ensslin, the son of former terrorist Gudrun Ensslin, is running for parliament on the Green ticket.

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A BEN MACINTYRE
IN PARIS

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Anti-abortion groups guilty of racketeering

A JURY in Chicago has found that two leading anti-abortion groups violated federal anti-racketeering laws — originally enacted to curb organised crime — by conspiring to close abortion clinics through violence, intimidation and extortion.

The decision was hailed by women's groups as "the biggest courtroom defeat for the anti-abortion movement". It could pave the way for scores of civil lawsuits against anti-abortion groups, brought by the nearly 1,000 clinics that perform abortions. This could potentially bankrupt large sections of the anti-abortion movement.

The suit was brought by the National Organisation of Women (NOW), acting on behalf of two abortion clinics in Wilmington, Delaware, and Milwaukee, against two anti-abortion groups, the Pro-Life Action League and Operation Rescue.

Filed under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act, the suit was originally dismissed by both a federal judge and an appeals court on the grounds that the Act applied only to activities motivated by economic gain.

In 1994, however, the suit was reinstated by the US Supreme Court. Now jurors in the US District Court in Chicago have decided that

US pro-choice groups may face financial ruin, writes Tunku Varadarajan

damages of \$86,000 (£48,000) should be paid to the two clinics. Since damages assessed under the Act are automatically trebled for punitive reasons, the anti-abortion groups must pay almost a quarter of a million dollars.

The plaintiffs in the suit alleged that leaders of the two anti-abortion groups directed their activists to "use threats and acts of intimidation and extortion in their efforts to shut clinics providing abortion services".

The jurors agreed, finding that the defendants engaged in a nationwide conspiracy that produced 21 acts of extortion, mostly by the formation of barricades that prevented the use of abortion clinics. Evidence was adduced in court that showed how activists had threatened, grabbed and pushed both patients and doctors outside clinics.

Susan Hill, the president of NOW, said: "This is a tremen-

dous victory for abortion providers throughout the country. We have finally cracked the conspiracy. For the first time we have proven in court what we have known for years. There is an organised campaign of terror being waged against abortion providers."

The jury's decision was criticised by Cardinal Francis George, of the Chicago Archdiocese. He said: "The decision in this case effectively equates freedom of speech with racketeering."

Joseph Scheidler, a senior activist of the Pro-Life Action League, said: "Now I'm a racketeer. When you can make a racketeer out of someone who is trying to save babies' lives, you have a strange law."

During the trial, the anti-abortion groups had sought to distance themselves from extremists who bomb clinics, insisting that their own activists were simply exercising their right to free speech by picketing the two abortion clinics.

Their actions, they argued, were protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Yet few civil libertarians have rushed to the defence of the anti-abortion groups here. Colleen Connell, the associate legal director of the Illinois branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, said: "This case is not the end of the First Amendment as we know it. Nobody's saying you can't walk down the sidewalk holding signs saying abortion is murder."

Washington: The publisher of a manual for would-be contract killers vowed to fight for his freedom of speech after the US Supreme Court allowed relatives of three murder victims to sue his company for civil damages (Tom Rhodes writes).

In a case that has become a touchstone for First Amendment rights, the families may now go ahead with their efforts to hold Paladin Enterprises, a mail order publishing firm, financially responsible for aiding and abetting James Perry, the killer.

Perry, while plotting the grisly murder of a mother, her quadriplegic son and an attending nurse, had bought one of the company's books: *Hit Man: A Technical Manual for Independent Contractors*. The triple killing shocked the Washington area in 1993.

to the running of the free world. Before Mr Reagan became President it had only one telephone line. He nevertheless spent 345 days there during his eight-year presidency, creating youthful photo opportunities of wood-chopping and horseriding to belie his advancing years, and taking Mr Gorbachev for a ride in a jeep whose number plate read G17P2R.

President Reagan also entertained the Queen there. On a trip largely washed out by rain, she rode side-saddle with him through the mud.

An offer from the Governor to buy the ranch for \$5 million for the state of California foundered on objections that it would run contrary to Mr Reagan's views on appropriate uses of tax dollars.

The Young America's Foundation, which fosters "love of country", small-government policies and other tenets of Reaganism among student-age conservatives, has pledged to leave the ranch exactly as it was when the Reagans lived there.

The Reagans now live in Bel Air, the wealthy Los Angeles enclave, where the former President suffers from Alzheimer's disease.

Reached by a twisting mountain road, the ranch presented logistical obstacles

beneficiaries would be people in states other than Delaware. He said: "We know where a sex offender is when he's in Delaware because he has to register with the authorities. The problem is if he leaves." Now, if an offender moves to another state and applies for another licence, the authorities there would be alerted to his character by the "Y".

One of the women's healthcare clinics wrecked by a blast during the campaign against abortions



Nike sued over Asian labour 'lies'

Los Angeles: Nike, the world's biggest sports shoe-maker, is being sued by a high-powered group of Californian lawyers who claim the company lied in advertisements defending its use of young and low-wage labour in South-East Asia (Giles Whittell writes).

The company has drawn steady fire for selling foreign-made shoes at huge mark-ups to America's youth. It is now accused of claiming falsely that its workers are guaranteed a living wage and receive free meals.

Drawing on a critical Ernst and Young audit of a Nike contractor's factory in Vietnam, the lawyers are demanding the company launch a public information drive to correct the "misinformation", and pay back four years of profits from California sales to the state Treasury.

Nike has dismissed the legal move as "a press release dressed up as a lawsuit", but will have to take it seriously nonetheless. Last year the team behind the suit won a landmark \$10 million (£6 million) settlement from R. J. Reynolds, the tobacco giant, forcing it to end an advertising campaign in California on the ground that a cartoon character targeted children.

Patriots make camp in Reagan's eyrie

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

A GROUP that teaches patriotism on American college campuses has bought a singularly suitable conference centre — the Ranch in the Sky — where President Reagan entertained Mikhail Gorbachev after denouncing the Soviet Union as an evil empire.

The Rancho del Cielo above Santa Barbara, known as the Western White House during the Reagan presidency, has been on the market for nearly two years at an asking price of \$5.95 million (£3.7 million) which most local estate agents considered much too high.

With Nancy Reagan's blessing, the five-room ranch house and 688 surrounding acres are being sold to the Young America's Foundation for an undisclosed sum. The Virginia-based group plans to make the property the headquarters of its Ronald Reagan Leadership Development Program.

"Ronnie and I are delighted," Mrs Reagan said in a statement welcoming the new owners of her old summer home. "We hope that our ranch will be a spark for many bright young Americans in the years ahead."

Reached by a twisting mountain road, the ranch presented logistical obstacles

to the running of the free world. Before Mr Reagan became President it had only one telephone line. He nevertheless spent 345 days there during his eight-year presidency, creating youthful photo opportunities of wood-chopping and horseriding to belie his advancing years, and taking Mr Gorbachev for a ride in a jeep whose number plate read G17P2R.

President Reagan also entertained the Queen there. On a trip largely washed out by rain, she rode side-saddle with him through the mud.

An offer from the Governor to buy the ranch for \$5 million for the state of California foundered on objections that it would run contrary to Mr Reagan's views on appropriate uses of tax dollars.

The Young America's Foundation, which fosters "love of country", small-government policies and other tenets of Reaganism among student-age conservatives, has pledged to leave the ranch exactly as it was when the Reagans lived there.

هكذا من العمل



Relatives awaiting the arrival of the Air France flight in Quito grieve on hearing the news that it had crashed soon after take-off from Bogotá

Crash pilot heard off-course warning

FROM DAVID ADAMS IN BOGOTÁ

COLOMBIAN officials yesterday confirmed the deaths of all 53 passengers and crew on board a Boeing 727 that crashed into a mountain only three minutes after take-off from Bogotá on Monday. One Briton was thought to be among the dead.

Many of the passengers on Air France Flight 422 en route to the Ecuadorian capital, Quito, were Europeans who had changed planes hours earlier in Bogotá after arriv-

ing from Paris. Air France said they included six French, seven Spaniards, two Germans, two Austrians, one Briton and one Swiss.

Other victims included Jorge Anhalzer, a distinguished Ecuadorian ecologist who, as president of the Charles Darwin Foundation, was involved in conservation on the Galapagos Islands off Ecuador's coast.

The search for survivors

was renewed at dawn yesterday after poor weather forced rescuers to abandon their efforts on Monday evening. Soldiers and Red Cross workers spent the night on the mountain to guard the accident scene from looters.

In Rome, the Foreign Ministry said the Italians who died included Silvia Citaristi, a daughter of Severino Citaristi, a former Christian Democratic MP.

Air traffic controllers lost



course and almost 3,000ft below the recommended altitude. "Turn right ... and climb to 33,000ft," the pilot was told. "Instruction received" were his last words.

The Boeing 727, belonging to TAME, a civilian airline owned by the Ecuadorian military, had been leased by Air France for a scheduled three-weekly service between Bogotá and Quito. Last week the same plane flew a delegation, including President Alarcón of Ecuador to a regional summit in Chile.

contact with the pilot shortly after warning him that the plane was dangerously off

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Dockers rejoice at jobs victory in Sydney court

FROM ROGER MAYNARD IN SYDNEY

JUBILANT Australian dockworkers enjoyed a dramatic reversal of fortune yesterday when the Federal Court ordered Patrick Stevedores to reinstate 2,000 full-time and part-time workers whom it dismissed two weeks ago.

The court said Patrick may have engaged in an illegal conspiracy after hearing a union allegation that the company had schemed with the Government and the National Farmers Federation over employing non-union labour. Although Patrick subsequently won time to appeal, the court's decision defused what was rapidly becoming Australia's most divisive and destructive industrial dispute in recent history.

John Coombs, national secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia, hailed the ruling as a victory for all workers. It was "an important step in

protecting the jobs of other Australian workers from ruthless employers", he said.

Mr Coombs demanded that Patrick immediately open its gates around the country.

Yesterday's ruling was a major blow for Australia's conservative Government which supported Patrick in its attempt to employ non-union labour. But Peter Reith, the Workplace Relations Minister, branded the decision unworkable.

"It attempts to rewrite contracts to place new contractual obligations on the parties and it effectively means that by order of the court, there must be a closed shop on the waterfront in respect of the Patrick terminals," he said.

Lawyers for the dockwork labour company last night won a 24-hour suspension of the order, pending an appeal,

expected later this week. Chris Corrigan, Patrick's chairman, said the court's order posed enormous practical difficulties. However, the company intended to comply with the order and would discuss ways of implementing it with the labour-supply firm involved.

Mr Corrigan pointed out that the judge had not tested any Maritime Union claims and therefore could not rule on the lawfulness of Patrick's action. The union offered to return its members to work without pay until the company was back on its feet.

Kim Beazley, the Federal Opposition leader, said the court decision had given the Prime Minister an opportunity to show leadership. He added the outcome of the dispute showed that the Workplace Relations Minister had reached his "use by" date and should resign.



Rolf, a 19-year-old Burmese python, is transported by its keepers to a new home at the Australian Reptile Park in Sydney yesterday. Rolf weighs 210lb, is 15ft long, and is the largest of three subspecies of Indian python. One species suffocates its prey with its powerful coils

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Chinese blot rights record again

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN BEIJING

TWO days after China's leading human rights detainee, the high-profile student leader Wang Dan, was freed and flown to the United States on "medical parole", news came of the punishment of a little-known mathematics teacher for meeting a human rights activist back from overseas.

Wang Tingjin, 43, from central Anhui province, was sent to a labour camp for two years for "disturbing the social order" by meeting Wang Bingzhang, Wang Tingjin's none of the three Wangs is related, — detected to a degree in the late 1970s but returned in February to form a party to challenge the Communist Party regime, according to the Hong Kong Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

The centre quoted Wang Tingjin's wife as saying he had not been given a trial or the opportunity to prepare a defence, having been both arrested and sentenced on Tuesday last week. Wang Bingzhang was held for three days in February, then sent back to the United States.

Reform through labour is a form of punishment that can be imposed by police without a trial. Two other dissidents have received similar sentences in the past month, one for calling for free trade unions on a foreign radio station, and the other for contact with overseas human rights activists.

At the same time Xu Wenli, the Democracy Wall pro-democracy dissident, was detained by police and then released while China's Prime Minister, Zhu Rongji, was attending a recent Asia-Europe summit in London.

Zhu Dazhao, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, indicated yesterday that Wang Dan, who wants to return to China later, would be sent back to prison to complete the remaining nine years of an 11-year term for allegedly plotting to subvert the state should he return. Mr Zhu added: "He understands this clearly."

President Clinton is due to visit China in June, and Wang Dan is believed to have been released to set the scene for a successful visit, although Beijing yesterday denied any deal with America.

NEWS IN BRIEF

US divers 'faked deaths'

Brisbane: Australian police are investigating claims that two Americans missing off the Great Barrier Reef may have staged their deaths.

Thomas Lonergan, 33, and his wife, Eileen, 28, — experienced divers from Baton Rouge, Louisiana — were reported missing after a January scuba-diving trip returned without them.

Another skipper is said to have heard American voices on his boat when it returned, with extra passengers, from the same reef a day later. (Reuters)

Burma jailing

Bangkok: Burma's military Government has jailed San San, 58, a leading pro-democracy campaigner, for 25 years over an interview she gave to a foreign radio station, an opposition group said. (AP)

Child protest

Karachi: Children from around the world marched to highlight the plight of more than three million Pakistani child workers, most of whom are employed in hazardous industries.

Pacific deal

Paris: The French Government, separatists and French settlers agreed on a December referendum on the future of the Pacific territory of New Caledonia, including a 20-year transition to independence. (AP)

Tram tragedy

Vienna: A tram crashed into a bank here, killing one person and injuring 48. The two-carriage tram was derailed at an intersection, catapulting the second carriage into a brick and plate-glass wall. (AP)

King's ransom

Strasbourg: King Constantine, the deposed Greek sovereign, whose property was confiscated by the Government, has won the right to take his case to the European Court of Human Rights. (AP)

French ex-ministers deny genocide charge

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

TWO former conservative Prime Ministers yesterday dismissed charges of French complicity in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, insisting instead that France had played an honourable humanitarian role of which the country should be proud.

A French parliamentary committee is investigating charges that France supported the Hutu-led Rwandan Government, slowed the advance of Tutsi rebel forces that would have stopped the killing and subsequently helped architects of the genocide to flee.

Testifying before the com-

mittee yesterday, the former Prime Ministers, Edouard Balladur and Alain Juppé (then Foreign Minister) both insisted that the sending of French troops to Rwanda in 1994, in what was codenamed Operation Turquoise, was a purely humanitarian and non-partisan action.

"France was the only country to intervene to limit the horror. Thanks to us, tens of thousands of lives were saved," M Balladur said.

The then Prime Minister also suggested that the Tutsi rebellion "came from Uganda" and that some Tutsis "had been trained in the US".

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Child's funeral reopens wounds of apartheid

**'Rainbow nation'
hopes suffer a
setback, reports
Sam Kiley from
Johannesburg**

MORE THAN 1,000 black mourners packed Benoni city hall to sing and pray at the funeral of a six-month-old child allegedly shot dead by a white farmer in a murder that has shocked South Africa and revived the bitterness of its apartheid past.

Outside the packed hall youths yelled "Boer, Boer, bullet, bullet", echoing an anti-apartheid chant which referred to killing white farmers. The newly divisive killing caused Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who spoke over the 3ft coffin of Angelina Zwane, to fear the passing of the "rainbow nation".

The child was shot in the head while being carried along a well-trodden path by her cousin Francina, nine, who was wounded. Nicholas Steyn, 42, who allegedly fired the shot from across a field, has been charged with murder and attempted murder.

The mourners, virtually all black, sat and wept in front of the chrysanthemum-covered coffin. Most followed it to a nearby graveyard for the burial. When a few gunshots were fired outside the graveyard, a common occurrence at anti-apartheid funerals, a speaker admonished the crowd to behave.

At the town hall service, some speakers — black and white — called for forgiveness



Mourners beside Angelina Zwane's coffin, covered in yellow and white chrysanthemums

salute. But yesterday she was anxious to prevent Angelina's death from becoming a rallying point for growing anti-white feelings.

Leading the mourners in ritual songs and dancing, she said: "We are stunned by this tragedy. We are numb with shock."

She said that the killing appeared to undermine the dream of a non-racial rainbow nation forged from the racial division of apartheid. "Maybe there is no rainbow nation after all, because it has no colour," she said.

But she noted how white shop owners had stopped her on the street and offered donations for the Zwane family. "This confirms that, although transformation is slow, we are getting there," she said of South Africa's shift from apartheid to a multi-racial society.

As a gesture of reconciliation between the Steyns and the Zwane family, who employ Angelina's grandmother as a cleaner, the alleged killer's stepmother, Eugene, joined the family in their shack for prayers before the funeral.

In another sign of change in South Africa, a speaker from the white-led National Party, which ruled during the apartheid era, received a polite reception and applause from the mourners. "The death of this child may be the beginning of the process of reconciliation between all our people that will break the cycle of violence," said Sam de Beer, an apartheid Cabinet minister who now heads the National Party in Gauteng province, which includes the Johannesburg-Pretoria region.

In contrast, the National Party had earlier blamed the Government for its failure to combat crime in rural areas — 500 white farmers have been killed in the past four years — which it said had led to the "defence action" taken by Mr Steyn.

Yesterday the National Party said in a statement that



Winnie Madikizela-Mandela sitting with Francina Diamini, Angelina's injured cousin, who had left hospital so that she could be present at the funeral

"history must not judge this awful incident as the resurgence of racial friction, but rather a tragedy binding together the nation as a whole". President Mandela visited the Zwane family last week and said afterwards: "This is a terrible disaster for the parents and for those who are busy trying to ensure a united nation of peace, where we can all live like brothers and sisters."

Mr Steyn withdrew a bail application last Friday and opted for the relative safety of the Modderbee prison as

black crowds gathered outside the courthouse crying for his blood.

He asked to be held in solitary confinement as a precaution against attack in the mixed-race prison, originally built to hold anti-apartheid activists.

□ Cape Town: President Mandela yesterday released details of a military report on an alleged plot to overthrow his Government, despite having dismissed the plan as a fabrication.

The report described a plot that included assassinating

the President and the country's top judges, occupying parliament and broadcasting stations, and "orchestrating generalised disorder" in the months before next year's national election.

Mr Mandela did not name any individuals alleged to have been involved in the plot, but the report said a group called Force African People's Liberation Army, or Fapla, was to carry out the coup.

The report also named top figures in the African National Congress whom it said were plotters. (AP)

India threatens Pakistan over its support for separatist war

FROM CHRISTOPHER THOMAS
IN CHANDIGARH



INDIA has warned Pakistan of "serious consequences" if it continues supporting separatist gunmen in Kashmir. It is Delhi's toughest rhetoric in years, marking a plunge in cross-border relations as Hindu nationalists consolidate control of India's month-old coalition Government.

The warning follows the slaughter of 26 Hindus in two villages in southern Kashmir by Muslim gunmen at around midnight on Saturday. The atrocity seems to have been designed to inflame religious tensions and scuttle tentative government plans to move thousands of Hindus back to the largely Muslim Kashmir Valley. Most Hindus fled the region in the early 1990s.

Lal Krishna Advani, the Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, who is a hardliner with life-long links to the fanatical Hindu Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, said there was little doubt that terrorist activities were being directed, controlled and financed from Pakistan. He all but rejected any possibility of progress in cross-border talks, saying they would have to take into account Pakistan's role in the conflict.

The Pakistan Government denies giving more than moral and political support to the separatist movement, but there is no doubt that it provides money and guns, directly or indirectly. A number of senior Kashmiri Muslim leaders are under investigation by Indian authorities for acquiring unexplained wealth, perhaps from funds supplied from Pakistan.

A 12-year-old Hindu girl who escaped the weekend massacre in the village of Barankot — it had 25 Muslim families and four Hindu families — said 30 to 40 gunmen moved into the village late on Friday. They asked the Hin-

dus to convert to Islam and killed them when they refused.

A neighbouring village, Agham, was largely burnt to the ground by gunmen over the weekend after its Hindu residents were killed. Mr Advani said the killings may have been in revenge for army operations against militants in the area, or they might have been designed to force Hindus to leave the region. The victims, who had been "butchered mercilessly", were so poor they had shared living space with their livestock.

The army and paramilitary forces have virtually crushed the nine-year separatist rebellion in Kashmir. Most of the remaining active terrorists are from Islamic countries, especially Afghanistan, and are fighting what they regard as a holy war. Srinagar, capital of the Kashmir Valley, has returned almost to normal and there is virtually no support any longer for the separatist war among Kashmiri Muslims.

Local newspapers, forced for years to publish statements from as many as 27 militant organisations, are now relatively free to write what they want. Many have become hostile to the corrupt practices of militant groups, which include extortion rackets.

Mirwaiz Farooq, the main Muslim religious leader in the valley, accused the press of succumbing to government pressure. Editors, however, have defended their new readiness to question the tactics of militants.

East Timor youths hide in British Embassy

Jakarta: Four East Timorese youths are seeking refuge in the British Embassy in Jakarta after entering the heavily fortified compound early on Monday morning. It was disclosed yesterday (A Special Correspondent in Jakarta writes).

An embassy spokesman, Hamish Daniel, said that the

three men and one woman "were being provided with shelter, food and water", but they had not said what they wanted. He refused to say how the four circumvented the 15ft-high fence topped with metal spikes and barbed wire.

The embassy has informed the Indonesian Government, the International Committee

of the Red Cross and the British Embassy in Lisbon, he said, to expedite their departure, which is likely to be to Portugal, the territory's former colonial power.

More than 150 East Timorese have entered foreign embassies in Jakarta in the past three years demanding asylum or passage to Portugal.

The embassy invasions have usually been timed to coincide with international events to highlight Indonesia's continued occupation of East Timor. Yesterday the United Nations Human Rights Commission was due to issue a rebuke of Indonesia for continued human rights violations in the territory.

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Feel me, heal me, help me win the cup

If England is to do well at the World Cup, they have to have faith. Enter Eileen Drewery. By Jason Cowley

Faith healers, prayer, sessions with Uri Geller — you could be forgiven for thinking that Glenn Hoddle was preparing for an important psychic fair rather than the 1998 World Cup finals in France.

His coaching methods are certainly becoming curiously and curiously. The appointment of Eileen Drewery, the faith healer he has known since he was a teenager, to work with the England squad is the latest in a series of increasingly... er, bizarre moves. At this rate, it would be no surprise to see Hoddle arriving in Marseille for England's opening World Cup match in June dressed in a turquoise David Icke-style shell suit, his hair long and curly.

There was general astonishment when Hoddle revealed yesterday — to the evident mirth of grizzled soccer hacks — that the England squad have been working with Drewery, thought to be in her late fifties, for 18 months, during which time about 20 players have visited her.

Hoddle himself is a regular visitor to her Berkshire home — he even briefly moved in with Drewery after the break-up of his marriage last October. "If you ridicule the appointment of Eileen, you've got a closed mind," Hoddle said, defending his decision on the eve of tonight's game against Portugal at Wembley. "Go and see her yourself and find out. I'm serious. Who knows, who knows. Keep your minds open."

Since retiring as a player at the beginning of the decade, Hoddle has spoken, again and again,

about his Christian faith, about his belief in prayer and alternative therapies. Hoddle met Drewery in Harlow, Essex, when she was working in his local pub and conducting impromptu healing sessions in the bar.

She speaks of herself as being divinely inspired: "What I do is not about miracle cures. I'm God's instrument and if it's His will, then I can help people to overcome pain and often heal injuries."

Don Copland, a healer and member of the Federation of Spiritual Healers, is naturally thrilled by the development, predicting that it may help healing to

nothing else than help the England squad to run on to the pitch feeling relaxed in France, then they will have a wonderful start."

Not much is known about her methods. Her patients, who include the England players Ian Wright, Les Ferdinand and Paul Merson, speak cryptically of how she "lays hands" on them and helps to "clear away" bad spirits. Hoddle suggests she works by "triggering the body's natural mechanism: it's as simple as that". Wright, the Arsenal striker who is struggling to become fit for the World Cup finals, is more specific. "She talked to me about her work,

how she was an instrument of God, how all of us can get trapped by negativity," he says. "She also explained to me about disempowerment — how people can get trapped by earth-bound spirits by taking drugs and all that kind of stuff."

Uri Geller, working for Hoddle in what he describes as an unofficial capacity, recently received a visit from Hoddle and Drewery. "I can't reveal what Eileen does," he says, his voice quavering with wonder. "All I can say is that what took place in my house was a mind-blowing experience. What happened did change me, positively."

Geller applauds what he perceives as Hoddle's bravery and willingness to embrace the unknown.

"Glenn has a powerful belief in prayer and there's nothing wrong with that. I'm glad he has spoken publicly about Eileen: it's time other people accepted this aspect of his belief," he says.

He does not think that the



Hoddle and Drewery: "Keep your minds open," he says

emerge from a cloud of suspicion and ridicule.

"The healer," he says, "acts like a substation generating electricity — or energy of healing. The energy does exist and some, like Eileen, believe it has a divine source."

The body has seven major energy centres; the healer identifies and cleanses these centres, and cures the damaged area through the laying on of hands.

The worst a healer can do, he adds, is nothing. There are no damaging side-effects. "It can also be very relaxing. So if Eileen does



Helping hands: "The healer acts like a substation generating electricity — or energy of healing. Some believe the energy has a divine source"

England squad, even if there are rationalists and sceptics among them, will be disturbed by the arrival of Drewery. "In every group of people you will find sceptics and cynics; but the England lads are very open-minded. If two or three of them don't believe in Eileen, they will keep quiet and smile about it inside. I can't see any trouble."

Geller has told Hoddle that he will send every member of the squad a copy of *The Little Book of Mind Power*, his study of faith and inner belief; he plans, too, to hire a helicopter and hover above the stadium when England are performing in France, willing the team to succeed.

"My book is very small and I

expect some of the players to put their copies, along with their chin pads, down their socks. They are open-minded and believe."

No doubt the Football Association, those sombre, dark-suited administrators of the English game, will be fascinated by Geller's next comment: "I am working for England on a parallel level to Glenn," he says earnestly.

To which one can say: well, useful to get that learnt.

Sportmen are notoriously superstitious. Paul Ince, for instance, puts his shirt on only when running on to the pitch; other players follow elaborate pre-match rituals. Round Cullit visited a psychic hypnotist, as did the boxer Nigel Benn. The England cricket

team even had its own in-house theologian, Andrew Wingfield Digby, offering "spiritual advice" to despondent players. But his appointment did not coincide with a resurgence in English cricket; he was banned from the dressing room when Ray Illingworth replaced the more cerebral Ted Dexter as chairman of selectors.

Simon Davies, a sports psychologist and a co-founder of Sporting Bodymind, an organisation that provides advice to a variety of sports, is reluctant to condemn Hoddle. "My feeling is that you should go with anything that offers the players support, so long as it isn't imposed on them

and you respect their differences," he says.

Craig Mahoney, the head of sports studies at the Roehampton Institute, is less forgiving. "We have sports and exercise psychology, which is founded on strong research, theory and practice. Sports psychology is about improving people's concentration and confidence, and therefore their faith and belief in their ability. But coming from a perspective of faith healing makes it very questionable. It's such a varied and unproven area."

Or, as the fans might prefer to put it, if you want to win the World Cup, Glenn, forget about metaphysics and concentrate on getting the ball into the back of the net.

Much ado about Bard's birthday

Fresh evidence shows biographers got it wrong, says Park Honan

IT IS said to be appropriate that Shakespeare was born on St George's Day, April 23, on which day he died in 1616. How convenient that he was born on the day of England's patron saint.

But fresh information makes that legend most unlikely. The notion that he was born on April 23 rests on "an 18th century blunder", as E. K. Chambers pointed out some time ago. In fact, there was a double blunder. For more than 125 years after Shakespeare died, nobody on record commented on his birthday. Then, around 1750, the antiquarian, misread the words on the tablet in Stratford church "obit anno... Aetatis 53" (he died in his 53rd year), and claimed Shakespeare was born on April 23 1563.

He was born in 1564, so Oldys was wrong by a year. Then, in 1759, Joseph Greene, curate of Stratford and master of its school, made a similar mistake and thought the poet was 53 at death. His view of April 23 was passed on to the 18th-century editor George Stevens, whose adoption of it in 1773 has been followed by most biographers since. Had Shakespeare's birth and death really both occurred on April 23, such a coincidence would surely have been noted within a hundred years of his death. Yet we have no sign of this.

New evidence about his family's loyalties suggests that it is likely that they would have had a strong motive for celebrating his birthday in a special way. Striking in Shakespeare's late life is his attachment to his elder daughter Susanna's husband, the physician John Hall.

Typically, the pair were in London together in 1614, when Hall endorsed the poet's view of a land-enclosure crisis. In making his will two years later, Shakespeare named Hall as an executor and ensured most of his estate would go to him and Susanna.

His will did not neglect his grand-daughter Elizabeth, the only child of Hall and Susanna. Shakespeare hoped for a male heir and thus the eventual marriage of Elizabeth would be of crucial importance. Exactly ten years after he died, Elizabeth, then 18, was matched with a man almost twice her age, Thomas Nash, to whose father Shakespeare had left a

memorial ring. The wedding was arranged for April 22.

It was De Quincy who first proposed that Elizabeth married on her grandfather's birthday, and scholars have thought that likely. What now emerges is that John Hall, as a legal executor of the will, had strong reasons to honour Shakespeare's memory. Susanna's loyalty to her father is not in question, and she and Hall would have had a large say not only in Elizabeth's choice of a husband but in the date of a wedding date. After all, the poet's wishes had focused on a prospective grandson. Hence the crucial, almost testamentary importance of her marriage, and the date of her wedding was almost certainly selected in honour of Hall's, Susanna's and Elizabeth's great benefactor. A logical inference is that

childless marriage. Of course, since Shakespeare died on April 23, we can still link him with St George's Day. Perhaps we can keep a birthday cake with candles and eat it, too.

● Park Honan is the author of *Shakespeare: A Life*, to be published by Oxford University Press in October



Shakespeare

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مَكُونَا مِنَ الْأَصْلِ

Softly, softly speaks the Fascist

Ben Macintyre on France's sinister successor to Le Pen

For anyone who has grown accustomed to the Jean-Marie Le Pen school of extreme right-wing thuggery, meeting Bruno Mégret, his deputy and almost certain successor as leader of the French National Front, is a jolting experience.

Mégret, a tanned, elfin figure with buck teeth and a ready wit, never raises his voice or speaks out of turn. He does not punch his opponents, deliver spittle-flecked xenophobic oratory or refer to the Nazi gas chambers as a mere "detail of history". Indeed, at a recent lunch with British and American journalists, M. Mégret barely mentioned immigration, the Holocaust or the other incendiary topics that reliably inflame the racist far Right.

"Of course, you are entirely at liberty to disagree with what I say," he observed earnestly. It is quite impossible to imagine such a mollifying sentence issuing from the mouth of M. Le Pen, who was last month convicted of attacking a female Socialist opponent during an election walkabout.

If M. Le Pen appeals to the jackboot tendency, then M. Mégret represents the Gucci loafer wing of the French far Right: charming, careful, coded and exceedingly scary. M. Mégret's is the new, soft-spoken voice of the National Front, and although he strenuously denies it, his challenge for the leadership is under way.

Mégret is more Gucci loafer than jackboot of the Right

M. Le Pen, who turns 70 this summer, will be banned from elective office if his conviction is upheld, but even if he wriggles off on appeal, the influence of the bombastic former paratrooper has begun to wane within the party he founded in 1972.

M. Le Pen, or "la bête" as he likes to style himself, has become a caricature, swaggering and increasingly absurd, whose talent to abuse, once a vote-getter, has become a liability. Relations between him and M. Mégret are predictably tense, for the National Front heir-apparent is a much more subtle and feline operator. His views are said to be even more extreme than those of M. Le Pen, but he serves them up with a silver spoon and a smile, not a cudgel and a curse.

The 47-year-old M. Mégret, an ultra-nationalist in the sleek "post-Fascist" mould of Italy's Gianfranco Fini or Austria's Jörg Haider, looks and sounds like a politician rather than a demagogue. A defector from Gaullism, he went to the best schools (the expensive Lycée Louis-le-Grand, the elite Ecole Polytechnique, the University of California at Berkeley) and gives off an air of sophistication that appeals to the middle-class voter.

"If patriotism is racism, then we are racists, but racism has never been defined in national terms," he says, with the sigh of a man misunderstood.

More important than his own plausible public persona, M. Mégret has developed a strategy that goes beyond a base appeal to the paranoid,

the disaffected and the merely racist. Paradoxically, the National Front is in an electoral impasse, stuck at around 15 per cent of the vote, but in regional elections last month M. Mégret hit on a ruse that for the first time capitalised on the moderate Right's disarray and translated popular support for his party into genuine political clout.

Candidates from the centre Right who had come second to the combined Left in the races to preside over regional assemblies were told that, in exchange for a few vague policy commitments, they would have National Front support and so win election. The Front has been discreetly wooing potential allies for months, and several local leaders leapt at the offer, plunging the mainstream Right into vituperative ideological chaos.

Crucially, the National Front forged those destructive alliances by not declaring what it stands for. The six-point programme presented as a precondition for support listed only a few unobjectionable promises to provide more police and less taxation. The issues of race and immigration were simply avoided.

That is the Mégretist way, but any notion that the National Front under his command could truly become a respectable extension of the moderate Right may be dispelled by a glance at events in the southern town of Vitrolles.

M. Mégret's wife, Catherine, is the National Front Mayor of this unruly spot outside Marseilles, but M. Mégret is the power in city hall. In the space of a single year, the Mégrets have cut funding to immigrant support organisations, ousted the local cinema director for scheduling films on homosexual themes, and filled the public library of Leftist literature.

Most dramatically, the Mayor's office recently announced that couples with proven French citizenship would receive a cash subsidy for every child born. M. Mégret, as always, had an innocuous phrase for this blatant effort to out-breed immigrants: "national preference".

These and similar policies implemented in the other three towns under National Front control, show that for all M. Mégret's gloss the party remains, to quote President Chirac, fundamentally "racist and xenophobic". Read M. Mégret's lips, however, and you enter an almost surreal world of distortion. "Imagine the conformism in this country if the National Front did not exist," he coos. "We maintain the diversity of debate and liberty of expression."

M. Le Pen may be one of the most objectionable politicians on the European landscape, but his very crassness has made him definable and containable. The sinuous deputy treading in his footsteps is a much more agile target, and France may yet come to feel an odd nostalgia for the devil it knew.

IF IT TAKES ONE PRIME MINISTER TWO WEEKS...



...HOW MANY PRIME MINISTERS, TAKING HOW LONG, WILL IT TAKE...



HOMEWORK

...TO SAVE THE WORLD...



...TO SAVE THE NHS?



22.4.98 Peter Brookes

Books do furnish a mind

Computers may be the modern communicators, but it is the book which captures human experience

What did Baroness Thatcher do as soon as she left office? She wrote a book. What did Mikhail Gorbachev do? He wrote a book. So did Nigel Lawson, so did General Schwarzkopf, so did Chris Patten, so does everybody in public life. The Princess of Wales shook the nation via a book. So did her husband. Sack a man and he writes a book. Honour a man and he writes a book. Ask a tycoon, a divorcee, a filmstar, a crook, even a Foreign Secretary's wife, to "tell it like it really was" and they cry with one voice, "Read my book!"

The book is an artifice of undying appeal. More books are being written each year than ever before in history. More are being published, more bought, more read and by more people. Titles published in Britain doubled over the past decade. Sales of books worldwide rose each year. Sales to children rose in 1997 by 6 per cent. When any of us wish to float an idea, upheave a nation, tell a life, cultivate a garden or cook a meal, we turn to a book. Books furnish a mind. Whether a reader is lying on a beach, trapped in an airport or confined to bed, six-by-four inches of inert carbon is a badge of intellect or at least a comforting friend. The invention of Caxton and Gutenberg has never been superseded. A book is as eternal as a house. It is walls, roof, door and windows, a shelter for the human spirit.

Yet the book has suddenly lost its confidence. Ask an author, a publisher or a bookseller about the state of the industry and you might have asked a farmer about the harvest. Times are terrible: give us a shilling, guys. They seem to feel that sneering ink on dead trees is a doomed cultural form. There is no cool in books, no technological buzz. Computers are the new communicators. Books are hard to dumb down. They have no lottery dangle.

Tomorrow marks the surest sign of that insecurity. The book industry has gone crying to the United Nations for a "World Book Day". Pundits will take to the airwaves to assure us that books rank with historic monuments, child slaves and Amazon tribes as in need of the world's prayers. Children will wear T-shirts and release balloons. Publishers will indulge in a veritable lunchtime of gloom. Pessimism always has the best times.

The latest threat is that the Internet will render the book obsolete. The

threat is lent credence by the Government's decision to spend more money next year on library computers (£100 million) than on books (£35 million with discounts). The key to the "democracy of knowledge" is said to lie in extending access to the Internet. There must be a terminal in every library and classroom. Who needs books, is the implication, when young and old can have the entire Library of Congress at the squeeze of a mouse's button? The book is wrinkly. Give pride of place to the Internet.

The history of technology is littered with such crassness. Open any school cupboard and out will tumble a stack of dusty CD-Roms and disk drives. These were sold to education departments on the Catch-22 principle that the "quickest route to riches is by selling the Government something it never knew it needed." CD-Roms followed even more costly "teaching machines" into the educational bin. Computer literacy is an important skill, and one that can be adequately attained in a few hours. It is even a valid core curriculum subject, which should not be at the mercy of lottery funding. But the phrase is an abuse of the word literacy, and offers no substitute for books. Attempts in America to construct a "virtual classroom" by closed "intranet", let alone by Internet, have been a fiasco. Sensible educators know that children are best taught by people, not machines.

Read computer journals nowadays and they tell tales of ailing software companies and losses among Web developers. The Internet is still a phoney service industry, free to users but requiring huge start-up costs to suppliers. Few publishing Websites dare charge, hoping to justify themselves by boosting sales of conventional products, such as books and magazines. The business guru, Peter Drucker's prediction (in

Wired magazine) that nobody but Bill Gates, the chairman of Microsoft, will make money from the Internet is not yet proven. But the Net appears to be shaking down commercially as a sex-and-shopping medium, plus intransigent for specialists. Its much-vaunted role as "on-line democracy", propagated by Ross Perot and the young Bill Clinton, is forgotten. The world's biggest purveyor of books, Amazon.com, has boosted book sales, but is not profitable. Indeed an irony of the Net is that its beneficiaries so far have been old-fashioned books and old-fashioned pornography.

Why Internet enthusiasts still feel the need to do down books is a mystery. "Laptop to out books" screamed *The Guardian* while plugging the silly "virtual classroom". It is years since Knight-Ridder's electronic newspaper thought it could out the printed word — and went bust. Likewise the on-screen novel enjoyed a brief vogue, even persuading George Steiner that conventional fiction was dead. The Web would enable readers to "interact" with the writer, to edit and alter text and thus achieve liberation from the dictatorship of the author. (There is plenty more such rubbish in *The Future of the Book* by Geoffrey Nunberg.)

Last week the Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced another of its gismos, a 200-page "digital book". In future hundreds of titles could be loaded electronically into the spine of a standard-sized battery-powered volume, whose pages could be "e-printed" by flipping particles on the page surface. This will apparently liberate readers from having to consume one book at a time. The new book could be taken on a journey or cosseted in bed, long seen as a problem for a lighted screen. MIT's Media Lab produces such Heath Robinson toys every year, apparently financing them from such despised and Neanderthal

art forms as books, lectures and conferences. Like everyone except Mr Gates, MIT is still waiting for the Internet to yield gold.

The book will never wow the technophiles. It is a means of communication that needs no power source, no labs, no scientists, no training courses and, worst of all, no grants for research and development. It is therefore of no interest to politics. A book is simply an object of delight. It can be used without tiring the eye, whirring a hard disk, cursing a mouse or scrolling a page. A flickering screen restricts peripheral vision, said to be one reason why "processed" writing is often so bad. Only printed type can be safely speed-read. Electronic bookmarks cannot match the thumb or the flick, any more than "run" and "load" can equal the serendipity of an eye roaming a shelf of books. There is still no "killer app" to equal Caxton's.

Yet this is a trivial debate. The Internet, like the microfiche, the Floppy, the CD-Rom and indeed the telephone, all have their place in the communications firmament. They are conduits for the worker bees of culture. Towering over them is the book, a product so entrenched as to need no apology. A book is not just portable information, but a world of imagination fitted into the palm of a hand. The essence of the book is the story, as old as mankind itself. Its words are shovelled into the mighty engine of grammar and sent racing down the track of narrative. When that engine is driven by Milton's writer, "precious lifeblood of a master spirit", it stands as the supreme artefact of human creativity.

I have read less than half the books I possess. The prospect is not dispiriting but thrilling. My bookshelves are a standing invitation to retrace my intellectual family tree. A computer may push torrents of information. A bookshelf gushes human experience. A computer may offer an author sources, a critic references, a publisher a shop window. But at the apex of this endeavour is the book. The book sees off every rival. One day, no doubt, it will see the computer screen into the museum alongside the penny-farthing, the biplane and the collar stud. The book needs no helping hand. It stands majestic on its own two covers, a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

Simon Jenkins

Patron's park

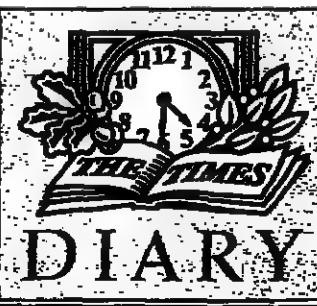
LORD CARRINGTON, the admirable elder statesman, is assembling one of the largest, private sculpture gardens in the country. Despite his ancient pedigree, the former Foreign Secretary has been commissioning Modernist works from Britain's top contemporary sculptors. His collection, covering two and a half acres on his Buckinghamshire estate, is now so extensive that there are only one or two spaces left. Carrington, who so valiantly resigned as Foreign Secretary in 1982 over the invasion of the Falklands, admits that his knowledge of sculpture was limited. "At the start, one didn't know quite what one wanted," he explains. "I knew I didn't want Venus rising from a pile of sea shells or anything like that."

Initially, Carrington, the sixth of his line and a former chairman of Christie's International, turned to help to the Royal College of Art which sent along Professor Bryan Kneale and four of his most talented students. Commissions followed thick and fast, including *Three Fruits*, his favourite lumps of stone (pictured), by Peter Randall-Page, a fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors. John Parry, editor of *Sculpture* 98 magazine, praised Carrington's patronage: "For someone who is so traditional, his choice of works are extremely innovative. He has gone for some of the most interesting new thinkers in the country." With support like that, I suspect it will



not be long before some of his protégés put up a statue of their patron.

AN EXHIBITION using billboards quoting spoof statistics to shock the public has been bombarded with complaints about every poster except one: "93 per cent of secondary school teachers cannot spell 'incompetent'". Says an



organiser: "It's such an unbelievable statistic, yet there hasn't been a flicker of complaint."

Staying away

WHEN does free hospitality undermine a politician's integrity and when is it perfectly harmless? Mo Mowlam seems to be absolutely clear about the answer. On Blair's Year broadcast by Channel 4 this week, the Northern Ireland Secretary said that she turned down weekend invitations to country houses because she feared being accused of favouritism: "I just think that's too dodgy." But then she swiftly qualified the remark by adding: "I've made the decision that I can't go with people that I've met since I have gone into government." Perhaps Mowlam was recalling the fine hospitality she has

enjoyed courtesy of Charlie Parsons and Waheed Ali. For I can disclose that the minister has stayed at least once at the luxurious retreat in Kent owned by the multi-millionaire duo who run Planet 24, the television company that produces *The Big Breakfast*. Although Mowlam has enjoyed the businessmen's hospitality since the election, she justifies her stay on the ground that she befriended them before May 1. William Waldegrave would appreciate her sophistry.

DELIA SMITH is taking stern action to improve the performance of her local football club. As the majority shareholder in Norwich City, the television cook (pictured) has hired new caterers after her side were shamed by coming 61st in this season's rankings of food at league clubs. Stodgy pies and hot



dogs are out. In will come toasted goat's cheese salad and creamy mussel and fennel soup. Smith's action is welcome but what a pity she can't do the same for the team: Norwich are struggling to avoid relegation from the first division.

Bad trip

AT a peak in his career, Hugh Johnson, the esteemed wine critic, has suffered a painful fall. The writer and broadcaster had just received the prestigious Karl-Friedrich von Rumor gold ring from the German Gastronomic Academy when he stepped back too far, fell off the podium and crashed into an empty fountain. Johnson, who was perfectly sober, broke his Achilles' tendon. His German hosts were so sympathetic that they sent Johnson a video of the award ceremony including footage — *a la Jeremy Beadle* — of the mishap itself. "It's a pity there was no water in the fountain," he says. "A big splash would have made a far better film."

THE winsome charms of Kate Beckinsale (pictured right) leave one man unmoved. Stephen Jakob, director of *Fair Trials* abroad, a pressure group, is furious about Two Girls, the fragrant actress's latest flick also starring Claire Danes, which tells the tale of two



female British teenagers imprisoned in Thailand for drugs smuggling. Jakob says it is based on the case of Karen Smith and Patricia Cahill, who languished for three years in a Thai prison for the same offence. He complains that the two were not consulted nor have they shared in the profits. The drug smugglers should not complain; they are lucky their sad experience is to be represented by two such winning actresses.

JASPER GERARD

Alan Coren



A dressing down in his Lordship's chamber...

Let me say, at the outset of what I fear may turn out to be the most controversial column I have ever been required to write, that not only could it not have been written at all without the full co-operation of its noble subject but that it was, indeed, his own gutsy initiative which generated it. Cognisant of the public furor of which he is, willy-nilly, the core, he has not shrunk from tackling the nettle: he has taken the tiger by the tail; he has buckled on his skates and launched himself across the thinnest of the ice. So, whatever might follow, I yield to no one in my admiration for our brave Lord Chancellor.

Nor in my gratitude for his allowing me to join the select group of media folk who were yesterday invited to watch him dress and, in the interest of the public he serves, pass judgment on our most elevated judge — who, since that elevation, has been refurbished, at a cost to the taxpayer of some £20,000. Was it, we were asked to consider, worth the money? Has it produced a Lord Chancellor for our times?

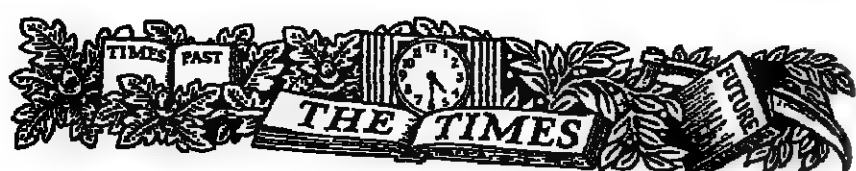
Not according to my distinguished colleague, the *Prothesia* Editor of that cutting-edge weekly, *Hair Today*. Having inspected Lord Irvine's upper reaches from every angle, he declared himself gobsmacked that £1,600 should have been thrown away on a full-bottomed wig in which no Cool Britain would be caught dead, not simply because of a style suggesting that the brain beneath was locked immovably in the 18th century, but also because of the caring sensibilities of the horse lobby. Instead, Lord Irvine should affect a ponytail, fashioned from his own hair, a feature to be found on many middle-aged icons which not only did much for their credibility (you had only to think of Peter Stringfellow) but would cost the taxpayer no more than a rubber band. Either that, countered the Editor of *Boyz Monthly*, or a nice baseball cap, possibly trimmed with fun fur, which could be worn peak-first for day-to-day duties, but ceremonially reversed for the State Opening of Parliament.

Moving down to the Lord Chancellor's court coat and waistcoat, the experts from *Arena*, *GQ*, and *Loaded* were agast that these had been furnished by Ede & Ravenscroft for £1,700, when a wide range of modish Peregrine T-shirts was available at under £25, to include personalised messages such as Here Come De Judge, or similar, beneath, say, a chic University of Okinawa surf-blouse. Only the *Big Issue* Literary Editor demurred, preferring an anorak: worn, of course, ironically. All these suggestions, it has to be said, were opposed by shriller voices who argued strongly for an Oswald Boateng suit worn over a Prada white cotton shirt set off by a Jill Sander tie, thereby making an export-targeted millennium statement which would enable the fashion industry enthusiastically to endorse British Constitutional Law.

Descending further down the Lord Chancellor, we found ourselves at some dispute over his black silk breeches (£350) and stockings (£25): several of our number argued that you could get the lot at Ann Summers for under fifty quid, but others were keen to retain the genuine article since they might, if mass-marketed less sensationally by Top Man or Gap, do much to make young people — irrespective of class, race, or substance of choice — come to a new admiration of law and order, especially if Lord Irvine's presently culturally remote legs were finished off not in black patent court shoes with gold buckles (£200) but in the *plus ultra* of trainers, Nike Air Jordans.

However, the one item to which unanimous exception was taken was my Lord's floor-length black damask robe, trimmed with gold. Since this cost the nation £10,000, it was a provocation which ran the gamut of objection, from *The Guardian's* claim that the sum would provide 500 maternity smocks for unmarried Inuits, to Sir Roy Strong's fear that any Transylvanian tourist spotting the Lord Chancellor's huge pale face sprouting from the top of it might well become hysterical at the thought that his neck was about to be enthusiastically pierced.

For me, I took no part. I was not qualified. No matter: it was enough for me merely to bear witness to the most momentous issue of my time.



MISSING PRESUMED DEAD

Hague must stop the slide into mindless opposition

Almost one year after its most devastating election defeat since 1832, the Conservative Party seems determined to challenge the orthodoxy that the only way forward is up. Andrew Mackay, the Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, has become the improbable symbol of the intellectual crisis that confronts the Tories. His absence in Namibia during the final phase of the Stormont talks was not in itself especially consequential. Had he been here he would have surely endorsed the settlement. The wider problem is that a significant section of the parliamentary party felt instinctively that it should find reasons to distance itself from the agreement. The remainder shows almost no sign of appreciating the broader constitutional consequences that a devolved Assembly in Ulster would represent.

The Conservatives must choose between two different political messages. The first would place emphasis on how much the party had learnt from defeat, demonstrating its willingness to change and including a new agenda of fresh and radical thinking. The new Tories would also adapt to the different political landscape, especially on matters constitutional, that they will inherit if returned to office. The alternative strategy is entirely negative. It seeks to persuade the electorate that Tony Blair and new Labour are no better than the last Government — equally sleazy, even more smug. It necessitates obstructive opposition on all fronts.

For several months the Conservatives have tried to straddle these options. William Hague has taken the high road with a set of impressive speeches. His party in the House of Commons have often made the Tealean appear reasonable. In recent weeks, perhaps more by accident than design, the balance has drifted in the wrong direction. This shift can be seen in the latest Tory campaign on the slogan of "New Labour: power has gone to their heads." An observer of the present Conservative Party in parliament could be forgiven for thinking that John Redwood and his wild rangers had won last year's leadership contest. Tactics that might raise backbench morale are of little value if they distort and destroy the wider Tory image.

Power may or may not have travelled to new Labour's heads. The more immediate question is whether anything at all lurks inside the Conservative cranium. If Mr Hague is not careful his colleagues will lead him down a cul-de-sac from which he will never recover. The public may indeed be learning to love New Labour less, although the evidence for this is somewhat slim at the moment. What is certain is that they will not care for the credibility of the Conservative Party crusading on such issues. Even if, a big if, the country could be persuaded that there was no distinction at all between the two main parties, it would probably prefer the one that was at least more original.

There is an alternative form of opposition that is both critical and constructive. It would constantly harry the Government on the state of the economy and refuse to be sidetracked into irrelevant squabbles. It would expose, by supporting it in principle and demanding appropriate policy, the chasm between the Government's rhetoric and what it has actually delivered so far on social issues. Above all else it would stress what is different about Mr Hague's Conservatism. The Tories need a new radicalism on tax and spending, a wholesale rethinking of the welfare state, a public pluralism on matters of personal lifestyle, a flexible attitude towards constitutional reform and an opposition to the euro based on concern for Europe not narrow English nationalism.

Mr Hague would probably accept this and argue that he has echoed the same themes in his speeches. That message, though, has been drowned out by his own Westminster mob. He needs to return to the lectern in person and stand down the goon squad. The time for the Tories to start their promised policy review under Peter Lilley and David Willetts is now. Those discussions should be on the widest basis and in the most open fashion. At the moment, the parliamentary Conservative Party would be better deployed doing nothing than in continuing with current tactics. John Stuart Mill referred to the Tories as "the stupidest party". On present trends he will soon be proved posthumously right.

BATTLES AND THE BULLY

How school safety can match changing ideas

Attitudes towards bullying in schools have changed dramatically in the course of one generation. When today's teachers were children, few would have dared go to a member of staff if they had been hit or taunted by other pupils. They would as likely as not have been met either with flat disbelief or an admonition not to tell tales.

Now, instead of either denying that bullying exists in a school or leaving children to "fight their own battles", teachers are waking up to the fact that it is a serious problem, and one that can and should be addressed. The few children who commit suicide each year because of bullying are only the most visible among many thousands more whose lives are made a daily misery by their classmates.

Yesterday the charity Kidscape published a survey showing that adults who were bullied at school were seven times more likely to commit suicide in later life. This is a stunning statistic. David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, has now offered extra support to overcome "the scourge of bullying" in schools. The Government has a role but the problem cannot be solved by edict.

Cruelty between children will never be eradicated. But nor should it be accepted as inevitable. Part of growing up is learning to replace thoughtlessness with consideration. Children do not naturally empathise with others; they have to be encouraged to do so. Some of the most successful anti-bullying strategies adopted by certain schools have

tried to make bullies understand the pain they cause by seeing their actions from the victim's point of view.

An anti-bullying policy may not change children's instincts, but it can have an effect on their behaviour. For it to work, however, a school has to make intolerance of bullying part of its culture. This means first being open about the issue, and then bringing the majority of pupils to see the problem — perhaps by encouraging them to help in drawing up an anti-bullying policy — so that the bullies feel marginalised.

Most important, though, is that the staff engage too. It takes bravery for a victim of bullying to speak up. There is the risk that the bully might take revenge. Pupils are embarrassed to admit that they have been victimised. And they may be worried that the teacher will either not listen or will dismiss their story. So staff must take these complaints seriously, acknowledging the courage that the pupil has had to surmount to talk about it. And they should take action.

One of the compounding factors in victims' misery is a feeling of impotence. Six or seven years in a school can feel like a lifetime to a child condemned to facing bullies on every day of term. If they know that the school will protect them against violence, at least they have a way out. All schools should take bullying seriously, and teachers should realise that bullying does not toughen pupils up. It destroys their childhood and scars their adult lives.

OVER THE MOONSHINE

Some things in the penalty box must be believed to be seen

The latest signing for the England football squad is a 57-year-old faith healer. Eileen Drewery met the England coach, Glenn Hoddle when she was the landlady of his local pub, The Shark, in Harlow. She discovered her healing powers after a near-death experience in 1974. This was not, it seems, watching Manchester City play. Now Mrs Drewery has become a full-time member of Hoddle's backroom staff in the run-up to the World Cup. She has been given a room at the England squad's hotel where the players can visit her for seances.

Mr Hoddle claims that "three-quarters of the lads have seen her over the past 18 months". The fork-bender Uri Geller's efforts to help the England squad by sprinkling crystals on their pitch and sending talismans to tuck behind the shin-pads may be unofficial and self-publicising. But Mr Hoddle declares that there is nothing new in his official new recruit. He said yesterday: "Countries have been using it [sc. faith healing] all round the world ahead of us for thousands of years."

And he is right. Zaire brought their official witch doctor to the World Cup in 1974. And chicken's blood and rarer fluids are still shed in dressing rooms and used as prophylactics to protect exotic goals. Legend, folklore and the Old Testament are full of accounts of faith moving man mountains and underdogs gaining an away win against insuperable odds because of adventitious aid. As a profession athletes have been

famously superstitious. Those with the strongest bodies do not have the strongest minds. But among the class of athletes, footballers are the most superstitious. From the way in which they tie up their bootlaces to such other prematch rituals as the sequence in which they step onto the pitch, footballers honour their tribal totems and taboos. Ian Rush was honoured as a scoring talisman for Liverpool after he went to Anfield in 1980. Whenever Rush scored a goal, Liverpool remained unbeaten. The spell was not broken until Wembley on April 5, 1987, when Rush scored but Arsenal won the League Cup Final 2-1. Or in more troubled times, on November 3, 1983, Watford placed an advertisement in *The Times* asking for players "between the ages of 18 and 80, preferably with two arms and two legs".

Frequent and chronic injuries have displaced England's preparation for the World Cup finals. They may also have encouraged injured players to try the wilder shores of healing in desperation to be selected for the final squad of 22. Team morale is half the battle on the football pitch as well as on the campaign, whether military or political. The left out that unbelievers in the squad may feel left out. But a win against Portugal tonight, with flair in midfield, width in attack and a bit of luck would do wonders for England's morale. Whatever other faiths they hold, fans have to believe in something. They do not have to believe in luck. But how else can they explain the other team winning?

Need for wider access to banks

From Dr Malcolm Hughes

Sir, It is not only the pursuit of shareholders' interests that has driven banks and building societies to cut their branch networks (report and leading article, April 20). Generally, these institutions and others competing in financial services have focused on the "quality" customer to the exclusion of all others.

Unfortunately for poorer customers, bank marketing departments have used earnings as an analogue for quality and have focused their efforts up-market. This approach has been sustained in spite of evidence that the longer-term profitability of poorer customers is actually higher than that of wealthier segments.

High-earning customers may be more profitable on an individual basis, but they are significantly less loyal to one supplier, preferring to spread their purchases of financial services across many competitors.

This promiscuity on the part of high earners more than cancels out their individual value. Indeed, the marketing programmes of the major banks and building societies actually encourage this behaviour with one-off deals, account-switching incentives and the absence of loyalty schemes found in other areas of retailing.

Financial services institutions should welcome poorer (and older) customers rather than actively discriminating against them. With appropriately designed and marketed products, they can be a loyal source of future earnings.

Yours faithfully,
MALCOLM HUGHES
(Senior Lecturer in Financial Services),
University of Hertfordshire
Business School,
Hertford Campus, Mangrove Road,
Hertfordshire SG13 8QF.
April 20.

From Mr R. G. Osmond

Sir, You report today that banks are to be encouraged to open more branches so that people will not need to go to post offices to obtain benefit payments. This seems shortsighted as it is difficult to see how many post office branches could survive commercially without benefit payment business.

Whilst the Government might save money (at the expense of the banks), it is hard to see there would be a lasting net benefit to those most in need of their benefit payments.

The thought, as your report states, that legislation might be used to make banks open more branches is quite extraordinary.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
R. G. OSMOND (Director,
CBI Education Foundation),
The Athenaeum,
Pall Mall, SW1Y 5ER.
April 20.

From Mr Harry Whitlam

Sir, Frank Field's energy would be better spent in persuading the Department of Social Security to change its system of payment rather than trying to persuade the banks to reopen closed branches. The 25 per cent of pensioners who agree to direct transfer are paid four-weekly in arrears, whilst those who use the order-book method are paid after only one week.

It is this that dissuades many from accepting direct transfer. Perhaps a small incentive to those prepared to wait might be a way forward.

Yours faithfully,
HARRY WHITLAM,
19 Woodkirk Avenue, Tingley,
Wakefield, WF3 1UL
harry@whitlam.demon.co.uk

From Mr John Earls

Sir, Frank Field is right to be concerned. Access to basic financial services is increasingly an essential part of social wellbeing in a modern economy.

The Treasury is drafting the Financial Regulatory Reform Bill, which will set out the functions of the Financial Services Authority, the industry's new regulator. Utilities regulators have a duty to consider the interests of the disadvantaged. The FSA should have a similar duty in relation to access to financial services.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN EARLS
(Research officer),
Banking Insurance and Finance Union,
Sheffield House,
1b Amity Grove, SW20 0LG.
jge@bifu.org.uk
April 20.

Iraqi children

From Mr R. I. Simpson

Sir, I wonder just how Mr George Galloway, MP, reconciles his statement that "the Iraqis are human beings like you and me and have children: when you cut them they bleed" with the UN report on human rights that 1,500 Iraqi political prisoners were shot last year as part of a brutal cleansing operation, with the relations having to pay for the bullets before collecting the bodies.

I read these two news items on the same page of your newspaper of April 15 (see also letter, April 20).

Yours truly,
R. I. SIMPSON,
Charfield Park View Road,
Woldingham, Surrey CR3 7JD.
April 20.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Knowledge v skills in education

From Professor Emeritus Geoffrey Harrison

Sir, Of course Chris Woodhead is right ("Gradgrind knew a fact or two", April 16). Knowledge and understanding in the different subject disciplines need to be taught. Of course Margaret Murray of the CBI is right to say that graduates can find that what they have learnt is often out of date and that they need to be flexible and self-reliant enough to meet the challenges of the future. Where lies the conflict?

The "product-process" question is a false dichotomy. The disciplines of school subjects should comprise both their knowledge and understanding and the capability to use them in solving problems. Key skills are ineffective without resources of knowledge and understanding.

The real discipline lies in combining skills with understanding, as in the national curriculum subject of design and technology, which requires students to "develop their capability through combining their designing and making skills with knowledge and understanding in order to design and make products".

Let's stop the simplistic educational rhetoric of product versus process and be more specific about what constitutes a useful education for the future, both at school and in higher education, for "if education is not useful, what is it?"

Yours etc,
GEOFFREY HARRISON,
Tall Trees, Victoria Road,
Bernard Castle,
Co Durham DL12 8HR.
April 16.

Tatchell's accusation of homophobia

From the Bishop of Oxford

Sir, Peter Tatchell is unfair to accuse the Archbishop of Canterbury of refusing to meet the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (letter, April 17).

The Archbishop, through the House of Bishops, has set up a special group, which I chair and which contains three other diocesan bishops, specifically to engage with interested parties and to further the debate on human sexuality. We have twice met a delegation from the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement and will be continuing in dialogue with them, as well as a range of other organisations. The Archbishop is kept in touch about these meetings and the continuing reflections of the group.

The House of Bishops is of course strongly opposed to homophobia in any form and encourages gay and lesbian Christians to make their contribution to the kind of sensitive and thoughtful discussions we are trying to encourage in parishes throughout the country. There are serious arguments about what is the proper age for decriminalisation of sexual activity, fostering and same-sex blessings, but it is quite contrary to the kind of spirit which we are trying to encourage in this debate to accuse those who take a more traditional view of being discriminatory or homophobic.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD OXON,
Diocesan Church House,
North Hinksey, Oxford OX2 0NB.

From Mr J. Longden

Sir, Peter Tatchell writes of homosexual discrimination and holds up

Policy on sex offenders

From Professor Malcolm Weller

Sir, There is current discussion about the potential danger posed by sex offenders on their release from prison (letters, April 8 and 14). A possible alternative that the Home Office seems to be exploring (report and leading article, April 7) is that they should go from prisons to psychiatric hospitals for an indeterminate period.

This suggestion illustrates a worrying trend to use psychiatric services as an instrument of social policy. Psychiatrists have no wish to be placed in the position of "treating" people who do not wish to be treated (and are likely in consequence to be unresponsive). The current Mental Health Act disallows compulsory detention for psychiatric disorder if the condition is not amenable to treatment.

I see no reason to tamper with this

From Mr Clive R. Hart

Sir, Chris Woodhead is right to challenge the CBI's long-held and narrow view of the value of free-standing skills bereft of a knowledge base, but it is pity that his article did not conclude with a more positive and active view of the way forward.

What the CBI has consistently overlooked is that the key skill is knowing when to apply knowledge and the best manner in which to apply it. No amount of factual learning or skill development in isolation will produce this result.

The fashionable phrase of the 1980s was "transfer of learning", which exactly summed up the need for people to be able to re-apply the knowledge and skills gained under familiar circumstances to those which they encountered unexpectedly later on. Under the seductive umbrella of the competence model adopted for NVQs (national vocational qualifications) and espoused by the CBI, this broader perspective of versatility, so needed in an age of advancing technology and job change, has been lost and the argument has become unproductively polarised into knowledge versus skills rather than knowledge and skills in concert.

Should not the Chief Inspector of Schools be actively engaged in remedying this situation rather than taking a singularly factual stand?

Yours sincerely,
C. R. HART
(Education consultant),
3 Cherry Tree Close,
Hugghenden Valley, High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire HP14 4LP.
April 20.

Examples, amongst others, of gay marriage and legal rights for gay couples as if these were self-evident.

They are not. If he has created a lifestyle based on his sexual tastes, that should be his own matter. But who says it should be a right?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN LONGDEN,
64 Downshaw Road,
Ashdon-under-Lyme,
Lancashire OL7 9QW.
April 17.

From the Chief Executive of The Children's Society

Sir, Peter Tatchell accuses The Children's Society of leaving young people in the "emotional coldness of a children's home" because we do not make placements with gay foster parents. This gives quite the wrong impression in two ways.

First, adoption and fostering is a very small part of our work. Last year 39,000 children were placed for adoption or in long-term foster homes nationally; of these we placed only 21. Secondly, the decisions about whether children are placed for adoption or fostering are made by local authorities, not by voluntary organisations. If a local authority wanted a gay or lesbian family for a child they would go to an agency who would provide such a placement.

Yours faithfully,
IAN SPARKS,
Chief Executive,
The Children's Society,
Edward Rudolf House,
Margery Street, WC1X 0JL.
April 17.

restriction, nor to aggravate the deeply unsatisfactory situation in psychiatric hospitals as a result of the widespread transfer of dangerous patients from secure and medium-secure forensic science units under Home Office licence.

We are struggling to cope with unprecedented numbers of aggressive patients. Half, or more, psychiatric in-patients are now receiving treatment under compulsion, some eight times more than six years ago.

It is hardly surprising that there are mounting difficulties in recruiting nursing and senior psychiatric staff.

Yours truly,
MALCOLM WELLER
(Chairman, North Thames Regional Psychiatric Advisory Committee),
Haringey Healthcare NHS Trust,
St Ann's Hospital,
St Ann's Road, N15 3TH.
April 16.

Difficult choice

From Mrs Rose L. Ashwell

Sir, Yesterday's *Times* had an advertisement for a Deputy Principal for Oaklands College in Hertfordshire. It stated that "... the person appointed will have accountability ..."

As the college curriculum embraces both motor mechanics and health and beauty courses, I wonder if they should use aromatherapy or engine oil.

Yours faithfully,
ROSE L. ASHWELL,
Millside, Digswell Lane,
Digswell, Hertfordshire AL7 1SN.
April 18.

Business letters, page 27

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046. e-mail to letters@the-times.co.uk

South Downs as a National Park?

From Sir Chris Bonington, President of the Council for National Parks, and others

Sir, Next month the Government will be considering responses to its consultation on how best to secure the future of the South Downs.

Its decisions will be influenced by the advice of the Countryside Commission (which meets on April 23 to consider the matter) and by the great number of people who have written from all over the country, or attended local meetings, who support National Park status for the area.

The Sussex Downs Conservation Board, set up as an interim arrangement, has itself voted for stronger conservation powers and a statutory role in the planning system. The debate has made it clear that the needs of the South Downs cannot be met by continuing to treat them as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, even under improved arrangements as advocated generally by the Countryside Commission.

The 1995 Environment Act gives ministers an exciting new option: to set up a new style National Park in the South Downs. This could offer the highest status of landscape protection and recognition whilst enabling care and management to be delivered locally and tailored to the special needs of the Downs. The flexibility provided by the Environment Act includes the option of development control decisions remaining with the district authorities if desired.

As the 50th anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act approaches, Britain should lead the world in showing that it is still possible to offer a sense of escape and wilderness in our finest expanses of less rugged country.

Many more people visit the South Downs in search of these qualities than go to the fells of any of our existing National Parks. The South Downs should join the fold of National Parks.

Yours faithfully,
CHRIS BONINGTON,
President, Council for National Parks,
DAVID J. BELLAMY,
President, The Wildlife Trusts,
ROBIN CRANE,
Chairman, South Downs Campaign,
DEREK HANSON,
Chairman, Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales),
NORMA JOHNSTON,
Director, Ramblers' Association,
TONY JUNIPER,
Campaigns Director, Friends of the Earth,
RODNEY LEGG,
Chairman, Open Spaces Society,
246 Lavender Hill,
London SW11 1LL.
April 20.

Bishops in Lords

From the Earl of Sandwich

Sir, Dr David Hope (report, April 10) is right to raise questions about the place of bishops in the House of Lords. The bishops themselves often mention that they are speaking on behalf of other denominations and faiths because there is almost no one else to represent them in debates.

As your Religion Correspondent says, the Government is unlikely to open the whole question of disestablishment on the back of Lords reform. Would it not be best to continue to recognise other denominations and faiths, as with the Army, the law and other professions, by way of the cross benches? This would become an additional argument for maintaining, and even increasing, the present quota of independent peers in a reformed chamber. It would also have the merit of continuity.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN SANDWICH,
Maperton House,
Beaminster, Dorset DT8 3NR.
April 15.

Celebrating St George

From the Reverend Bernard Eager

Sir, I suggest to Mr Kerry Woodrow (letter, April 21) the following menu for St George's Day: oxal soup; roast beef on the bone; then an egg custard. He should take this meal at the Palace of Westminster as a challenge to the government dragon that interferes more and more with our individual freedoms and from which I pray, through the intercession of St George, we will at length be delivered.

Yours faithfully,
BERNARD EAGER,
St Catherine's,
Newton Road,
Lewton, Warrington WA3 1LB.
steaths@compuserve.com
April 21.

Shining example

From Miss Heather Ridge

Sir, Today, whilst looking with appalled fascination at the photographs of the Lord Chancellor's refurbished apartments, I was reminded of Dolly Parton's reputed reply to a compliment about the rhinestone-encrusted frock she was wearing: "Honey, it costs a lot of money to look this cheap."

Yours sincerely,
HEATHER RIDGE,
39 Andrews House,
Barbican, EC2Y 8AX.
April 21.

OBITUARIES

Ernest Neal, MBE, badger expert, biologist and schoolmaster, died on April 5 aged 86. He was born on May 20, 1911.

Known as "the Badger Man", Ernest Neal was to badgers what Gavin Maxwell was to otters. The sight of badger cubs playing in a Cotswold wood in 1936 inspired a lifelong study of the species. He wrote authoritative books on them and in 1952 he made the first film of badgers in the wild. But his interest in wildlife was much wider than his sobriquet would suggest. He had a successful career as a schoolmaster, becoming head of science, a housemaster and second master at Taunton School.

Ernest Gordon Neal was born in Boxmoor, Herts, where his father, the Rev Frederick Neal, was Baptist minister. He was the youngest of four children brought up in maternal and spiritual austerity. "No compromises were tolerated on moral issues," Ernest Neal later wrote. But there were breaks from the somewhat oppressive religiosity. Ernest Neal's interest in nature was kindled by his father's breeding butterflies; his mother Margaret taught him the names of wild flowers.

In 1917 the Neals moved to London: the father had become minister of York Road Baptist Church in Bayswater. After kindergarten and various prep schools, Ernest Neal went to Taunton School, where his form master, Dr Watson, was a botanist and an international authority on lichens.

Neal would have liked to be a doctor, but there was no money to pay for such a course, so he decided to teach biology. The cheapest way to get a degree was to attend a polytechnic. At Chelsea Polytechnic the head of zoology was Christo-

pher Hentschel, the son of one of the characters in Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*. He encouraged Neal to apply for one of the three continuation scholarships offered by the college — which enabled Neal to scrape by.

Neal formed a natural history society at the college, at one meeting of which a film of gannets by Humphrey Hower and Julian Huxley was shown. It heightened Neal's interest in photography and later he was to make a film with Hower. While at Chelsea he became engaged to a fellow student, Helen Elizabeth (Betty) Thompson: they married in 1937.

After graduating with a London University degree in botany, zoology and chemistry, Neal did a year's research at Chelsea, under Hentschel. In 1936 he applied to be biology master at Rendcomb College, near Cirencester. The headmaster, Denis Lee-Browne, interviewed him over a restaurant lunch. There was a foreign body in Neal's soup, Lee-Browne asked him what he thought it was. "A leg of a cockroach, sir," I replied without hesitation. As a biologist himself, he was able to confirm my identification. Neal got the job.

It was in the woods near the school that he had his first sighting of badger cubs. The next night, he went back to photograph them with a Zeiss plate camera and magnesium flares. During the war he registered as a conscientious objector, on religious grounds. A tribunal rejected his plea; but at his medical examination for the services he was put into the lowest grade because he had suffered from duodenal ulcers. So he stayed at the school, where the boys were encouraged to "dig for victory". With senior pupils, Neal analysed the stomach contents of a dead badger (a diet of worms). He was also studying the mating habits of



badgers: his findings on the animals' reproductive cycle were among his most significant contributions to science.

After the war he took up the post of his old biology teacher, Dr Watson, at Taunton School. The freezing winter of 1946-47 brought him the bodies of many incautious badgers for dissection. He published his first books, *Exploring Nature with a Camera* (1946) and *The Badger* (1947). The badger book, one of a memorable Collins series on wildlife, brought him several invitations to broadcast. When Richard Dimbleby brought the *Down Your Way* programme to Taunton in 1952, he was happy to include (as Neal wryly put it) "an eccentric schoolmaster who watched badgers at night".

In 1952 Neal made a film about badgers with Humphrey Hower, using the grounds of his brother William Keith Neal's large house near Warminster as his location. Gradually the badgers became used to lights and camera noise. The film was shown on television in



Ernest Neal, "the Badger Man", and one of his nocturnal photographs of his shy friends

1952, accompanied by an on-screen discussion with Sir Peter Scott as to how it had been made. Also in 1954, Neal was co-founder of the Mammal Society, which aimed to bring professional scientists and amateur naturalists together.

In 1958 he had become a housemaster at Taunton School, and in 1960 he was made second master as deputy to John Leatham. (In that year, too, he was awarded his PhD by London University.) John Rae, later Head Master of Westminster School, who succeeded Leatham as Headmaster of Taunton School in 1966, aged 34,

was grateful for Neal's experience and advice. Like the universities, schools were suffering from "student unrest". Boys were refusing to talk to masters at lunch or to sing hymns at compulsory chapel. "Many schools panicked," Rae recalled. "But Ernest was a wonderful guide and mentor. He used his experience to help me not put too many feet wrong."

felt he was unable to be objective where badgers were concerned: he was almost an honorary badger. In an interview with *The Sunday Telegraph's* magazine which appeared under the appalling headline "Snout to make a fuss about" (marginally more dreadful than the pithy summary of his career as "Game set and match"), he said: "I'm a scientist, not a sentimentalist... But in the areas where the badger does no harm the animal should be protected — and I shall fight to see that it is." He helped amend Lord Arran's Bill to protect badgers, which became law in 1973.

He retired from Taunton School in 1971. He and Betty moved first to Milverton, eight miles from Taunton, then to Bedford, where they shared a big house with their son David and his family. Another son, Keith, by now head of science at Harrow County School, helped him to write a biology textbook for O-level candidates. His autobiography, *The Badger Man: Memoirs of a Biologist*, appeared in 1994. He took an active role in the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation.

In a foreword to one of Neal's books on badgers, his friend Sir David Attenborough paid tribute to his life's work: "A few people, for varying reasons, have become so closely identified with a British animal that the name of one instantly recalls the name of the other. John Peel with the fox; Thomas Muffet, the 17th-century doctor naturalist whose little daughter so injudiciously sat on a tuft, with spiders; and Sir Peter Scott with wildfowl. The name Ernest Neal is linked permanently with badgers."

In 1966 Neal was presented with the Stamford Raffles Award of the Zoological Society of London. He was appointed MBE in 1976. He is survived by his wife Betty and their three sons.

JOHN WILBRAHAM

John Wilbraham, trumpeter, died from kidney failure on April 6 aged 53. He was born on April 15, 1944.

FOR the ambitious young trumpeter in early 1980s, two players loomed large: the French virtuoso Maurice André and John Wilbraham, whose career spanned three decades. His uniquely big sound and facility on the higher pitched trumpets — he rarely played the standard Bb — allowed him to move with versatility from Bach to Bruckner and from Boulez to the Beatles (he appears on *The Magical Mystery Tour*).

Most notably, perhaps, he was principal trumpet of the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Pierre Boulez and then Gennady Rozhdestvensky. But for many years he also performed and recorded with both the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields under Neville Martin-Smith and the English Chamber Orchestra under Raymond Leppard. He played for Karl Richter's Mu-



nich Bach Orchestra and appeared as a guest principal with the Vienna Philharmonic. He was also a member of the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble between 1966 and

1971. At the end of the 1980s he was for two years co-principal trumpet of the Philharmonia Orchestra.

He recorded many scores for radio and film (including *Diamonds are Forever* in 1971 and *The Man Who Would Be King* in 1975). For television he played Geoffrey Burgon's trumpet theme for Granada's 1981 adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*.

John Wilbraham was born in Bournemouth. Having picked up a trumpet relatively late, at the age of 14, he worked out the fingerings and was playing at the local lido within a week. Sunday lunchtimes in his youth were spent playing Dileland jazz in the pubs of South London suburbs. His formal training came at the Royal Academy of Music, 1962-65, where he was awarded the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. He then continued his studies with Maurice André in Paris.

From the age of 23, Wilbraham recorded and performed the solo repertoire, and his playing inspired a number of new works written especially for him. Secure in the trumpet's upper register, he was a pioneer of period instrument practice, playing on the natu-

ral trumpet. However, it was as a brilliant performer of Baroque music on the modern piccolo trumpet that he secured his reputation.

A fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, Wilbraham had also been professor of trumpet there. He held teaching positions at the Birmingham School of Music, the Royal Military School of Music (Kneller Hall), with the National Youth Orchestra and at Wells Cathedral School. He also ran an ad hoc private teaching practice in the basement of Phil Parker Ltd, in the days when that family firm ran a specialist brass shop in small premises in Chiltern Street, W1. Students would emerge clutching scraps of manuscript paper on which he had written his method: it was very simple, very logical and — if you had faith and practice — it worked. His lessons were unconventional. The pupil might play only a handful of notes, yet he would leave the room feeling much more positive and armed with knowledge.

Wilbraham left London in 1991 and made his home in Wells, Somerset. In late 1993 he was very ill with kidney failure and nearly died. Modest almost to the point of pride, he was greatly flattered by the attention he received, but he never fully recovered. His career became a shadow of what it had been — Gilbert and Sullivan in Yeovil in the long way from Bach in Vienna — and for a man addicted to the trumpet this was difficult to endure.

Yet admirers willingly made pilgrimages to see and hear him, and he enjoyed a lot of contact with a small number of friends and former students. He was fond of putting the right people in touch with one another. He worked with two of his former pupils on a book about his teaching method which will be published shortly, putting his common sense approach into print. He also gave a lot of time and support to Alcoholics Anonymous in the West Country and in London. He had no children.

He was divorced from the harpist Susan Drake. He had no children.

His branch of the family became Roman Catholics through the Oxford Movement, the 19th-century religious grouping which aimed originally to revive Catholic thought and practice within the Church of England. John Coventry's great grandfather — an Anglican rector in Hampshire — joined the movement (subsequently, like Newman and Manning, defecting to Rome).

This caused a great deal of family anguish, and the former rector eventually took himself off with his wife and children to France. He and his descendants lived at Dinard, near St Malo, for two generations, but one of his sons married Emily Weld of Lutworth Castle. She came from a family of large landowners in Dorset and Lancashire who gave their ancestral estate, Stonyhurst near Pres-

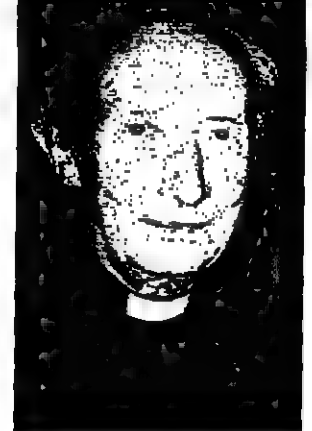
ton, for the founding of a Jesuit public school, John Coventry himself went there before going on to Campion Hall, the Jesuit house in Oxford, where he took a first in Greats.

Although a very quiet man, Coventry liked people who spoke out in strong, prophetic voices. The theologian Yves Congar, whom Pope John Paul II made a cardinal, was a special favourite. He had been severely criticised by Rome in the 1950s and 1960s for his progressive theological views only to have them incorporated, bit by bit, in Vatican statements of the 1970s and 1980s. Others who inspired him were Helder Camara of the huge and impoverished diocese of Recife in Brazil and Archbishop Os-

car Romero of San Salvador, gunned down at his own cathedral altar in 1980. Coventry's first major job was as Prefect of Studies (and then as Rector) of the Roman Catholic public school, Beaumont College, Windsor. It was a time when Jesuits were far more numerous than they are today and he involved many of them in teaching there (as well as bringing in lay staff, feeling they, too, had a contribution to make).

One of his surprises on becoming Provincial of the English Province of the Society of Jesus in 1958 was the extent of the foreign travel that it involved. The province has considerable commitments in Central America. He also travelled to its missions in

cheerful or comic duties were performed with zest. Advance publicity did Mr. Arkady Raikin, the Russian comedian, an injustice by suggesting that he is, to speak, a side-splitter. He is fundamentally a character actor basing his work upon meticulous, sympathetic observation of all manner of people. His humour is gentle, and tends to find paths as well as amusement in the activities of others. Variations of costume and the minimum of make-up is all that he needs to assist him, and with a perfectionist's courtesy, he had rehearsed a good deal of his act in English. Mr. Raikin's colleagues, of the Leningrad Miniature Theatre, are obviously neat and skilful but the act is almost exclusively his. The only survivors of the scheduled Tuesday programming were the ever-young Mr. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. There was, too, news provided by a team of reporters and therefore apparently more informal than television news has been in the past. Throughout the evening, 625 lines provided sharply defined pictures and a perhaps illusory sense of greater depth than we have been accustomed to.



PERSONAL COLUMN

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FLIGHTSEEKERS

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0181 455 4420

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0171 663 4425

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ON THIS DAY

April 22, 1964

NO ANTI-CLIMAX FOR B.B.C.2

0181 455 4420

TRUSTEE ACTS

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LEGAL, PUBLIC, COMPANY & PARLIAMENTARY NOTICES

0171-680 6878 OR FAX: 0171-481 9313

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NEWS

Britain accepts uranium shipment

A load of nuclear weapons-grade uranium is due to be flown from the former Soviet republic of Georgia to Scotland this week after a secret deal between Tony Blair and President Clinton to prevent it falling into the hands of terrorists.

Britain agreed to take the uranium — which will be reprocessed at Dounreay and used to make medical isotopes for cancer treatments — after two years of negotiation failed to find a home for it in Russia, America or France. Page 1

Nanny may face murder charge

An Australian nanny is likely to be charged with murder or manslaughter after a six-month-old girl left in her care died yesterday. Marcel Jongen and his wife Marial were at their daughter Caroline's bedside in the paediatric intensive-care unit at Great Ormond Street Hospital when she died. Page 1

Channel strike

French seamen caused huge disruption to channel ferry traffic when they went on strike in support of a colleague who had been disciplined over drug charges. Page 1

Car pay deal

Vauxhall has offered its 9,800 UK workers a radical package that will link their pay to the strength of the pound against the German mark. Page 1

Cook fights back

Robin Cook will tonight relaunch his political career with the first of a series of keynote speeches to mark the first anniversary of the Labour government. Page 2

McCartney tribute

Sir Paul McCartney told of his "total heartbreak" at the death of his wife, Linda, as he paid his own emotional tribute to the woman he described as "the love of my life". Page 3

Smear test failure

Mistakes and sloppiness across the cervical smear testing system are putting women's lives at risk, said the National Audit Office. Page 4

Murdoch separation

Rupert Murdoch has separated from his wife Anna one week before their 31st wedding anniversary. Mrs Murdoch, 53, will remain on the board of The News Corporation. Page 5

Government ignores beef defeat

The Government rejected calls to lift the beef-on-the-boom ban after a Scottish court threw out the first prosecution for breach of the regulations. Jim Sutherland, a hotelier, who could have faced up to two years in jail, was cleared by Selkirk Sheriff Court, which ruled that the regulation under which he had been charged was defective and ultra vires. Page 1

PoW anger

Former British prisoners-of-war of the Japanese promised a series of public demonstrations during next month's state visit by Emperor Akihito. Page 6

Witness conference

The magistrate investigating the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, will summon witnesses to Paris in June in a final attempt to hammer out a definitive version of events. Page 7

Boost for summit

The London summit on the Middle East was given an important boost when Benjamin Netanyahu promised to hold face-to-face talks with the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. Page 11

Equine rescue squad

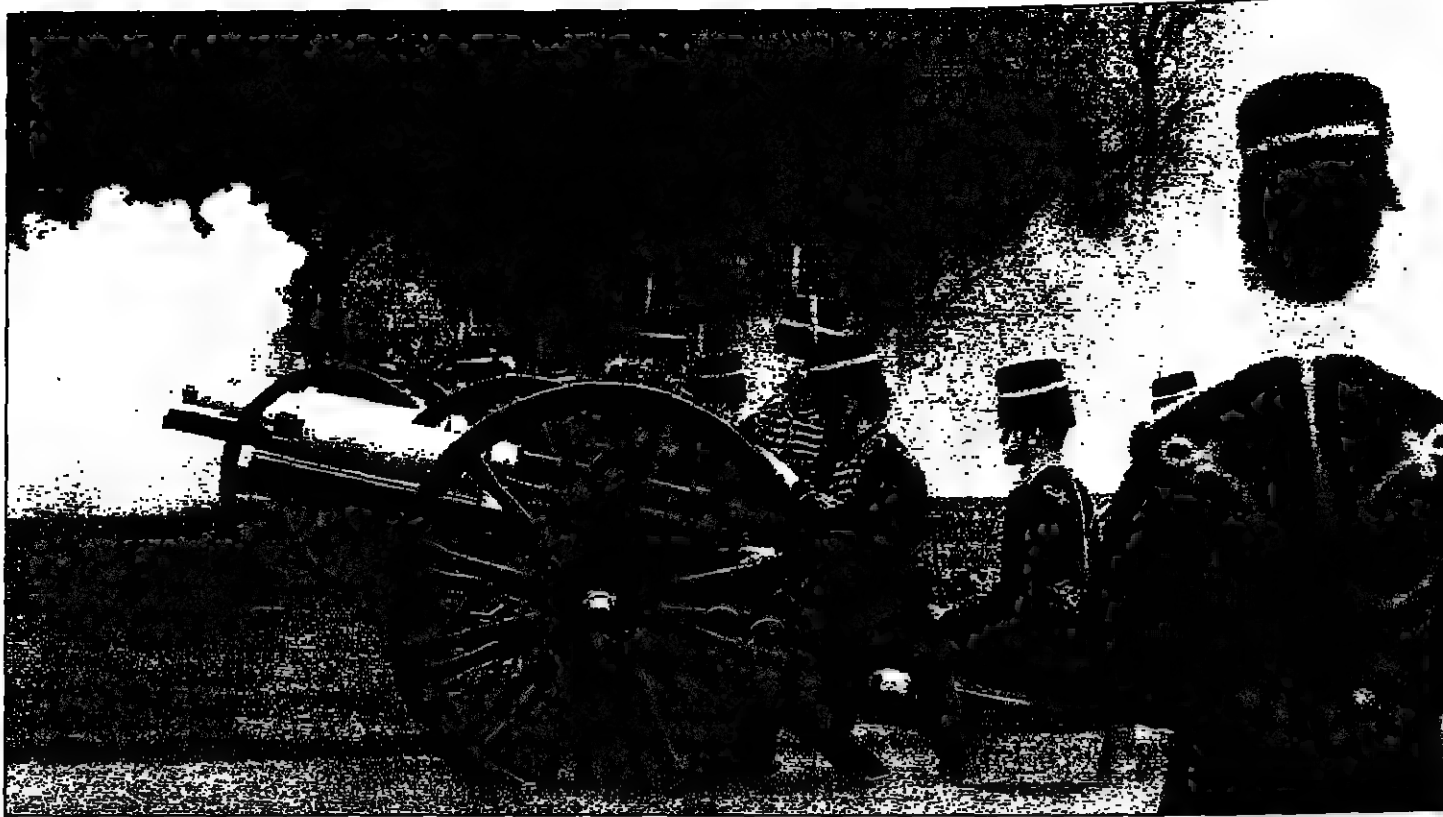
Bosnian stud workers thanked British soldiers for highlighting the plight of their Lippizaner horses, some of which have been sold to farmers to pull carts and others have been eaten. Page 12

Abortion victory

A Chicago jury has found that two anti-abortion groups violated federal anti-racketeering laws by conspiring to close clinics through violence. Page 13

Dockers rejoice

Jubilant Australian dockworkers enjoyed a dramatic reversal of fortune when the Federal Court ordered Patrick Stevedores to re-instate 2,000 workers. Page 14



Gunners from the Kings Troop, Royal Artillery, yesterday fire a salute in Hyde Park to mark the 72nd birthday of the Queen

BUSINESS

Pension fine: A City watchdog fined Sun Life of Canada £600,000 plus £125,000 in costs over pensions mis-selling after a visit to the company. Page 23

Economy: Eddie George, the Bank of England Governor, dropped a strong hint that rates have peaked, claiming there are "encouraging signs" that the economy is slowing sufficiently to keep inflation under control. Page 23

In front: Ireland has overtaken the UK in the world league table of economic performance, according to an authoritative ranking list. Page 23

Markets: The FTSE 100 rose 0.9 to 5955.0. Sterling fell to 106.3, down from \$1.6780 to \$1.6753 and DM3.0248 to DM3.0000. Page 26

SPORT

Football: Manchester United are prepared to bid a British record £18 million to bring Alessandro Del Piero, the finest young Italian forward of his generation, to Old Trafford. Page 44

Crickets: The performance of Darren Gough in Yorkshire's 215-run victory over Somerset will have encouraged David Graveney and his England selectors. Page 40

Tennis: Tim Henman lost 6-2, 6-4 to Galo Blanco, of Spain, in the first round of the Monte Carlo Open. Blanco, world ranked No 59, was never seriously tested. Page 42

Athletics: Catherine McKiernan, the favourite to win the women's race in the London Marathon, may have been to pace her in a challenge for the world record. Page 39

ARTS

Cool duo: Brothers Joel and Ethan Coen may be fond of playing practical jokes but when it comes to making films like *The Big Lebowski* they are pretty serious. Page 30

Now looking: Tomorrow is World Book Day and Britain is celebrating with a wealth of high-jinks in schools, libraries, shops and hospitals nationwide. Page 31

Fantasy land: In his first big show rising artist Chris Ofili demonstrates an impressive range, from the notorious elephant dung pictures to brilliantly executed flowers. Page 31

Gold fingers: John Barry, composer of Bond themes galore, gives his first concert in 23 years and wins three standing ovations from an Albert Hall audience. Page 32

FEATURES

Team spirit: Glen Hoddie has hired a faith healer to work with the England World Cup football squad: Uri Geller plans to hire a helicopter and hover above the stadiums where the lads are playing... What about just aiming to get the ball into the back of the net, wonders Jason Cowley. Page 16

Bard's birthday: Shakespeare was said to be born on St George's Day, April 23, but was he? New information makes the claim appear less likely. Page 16

Israel at 50: In the first of a two-day series, Tim Hames charts the stormy first 50 years of the Jewish State and Christopher Walker talks to Josef Burg, a survivor of the Holocaust who was there from the beginning. Page 17

HOMES

Big bite: Warmer weather in northern Europe is bringing house-eating insects to England. What is the risk and how can householders guard against it? Page 35

THE PAPERS

With China headline news in Britain these days and Sino-British relations on the up and up, Mr Blair's Beijing visit could well supplant publicity for Hague's Bournemouth bash and bury the Tory message. Conspiracy theorists may claim a deliberate clash. — Hong Kong Standard

TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

FILMS
Geoff Brown sees Matt Damon in *The Rainmaker*, John Grisham's latest

BOOKS
World Book Day: Tony Blair introduces a special supplement

RADIO & TV

Preview: An amateur cook puts her puddings on the menu *Chef for a Night*, Channel 4, 8.30pm) Review: Joe Joseph enjoys the final of *University Challenge*..... Pages 42, 43

OPINION

Missing presumed dead

Power may or may not have travelled to new Labour's heads. The more immediate question is whether anything at all lurks inside the Conservative cranium. Page 19

Battles and the bully

Attitudes towards bullying in school have changed dramatically in the course of one generation. Page 19

Over the moonshine

The latest signing for the England football team is a 57-year-old faith healer. Page 19

COLUMNS

SIMON JENKINS

What did Baroness Thatcher do as soon as she left office? She wrote a book. What did Mikhail Gorbachev do? He wrote a book. So did Nigel Lawson, so did General Schwarzkopf, so did Chris Patten, so does everybody. Page 18

BEN MACINTYRE

For anyone who has grown accustomed to the Jean-Marie Le Pen school of extreme right-wing thugger, meeting Bruno Megret, his almost certain successor, is a jolting experience. Page 18

ALAN COREN

Cognisant of the public furore of which he is, willy-nilly, the core, he has not shrunk from tackling it head-on... So, whatever might follow, I yield to no-one in my admiration for our brave Lord Chancellor. Page 18

PETER RIDDELL

The anniversary of Labour's election victory is being marked by an orgy of self-justification, starting this morning with Robin Cook's address to the Social Market Foundation. Page 10

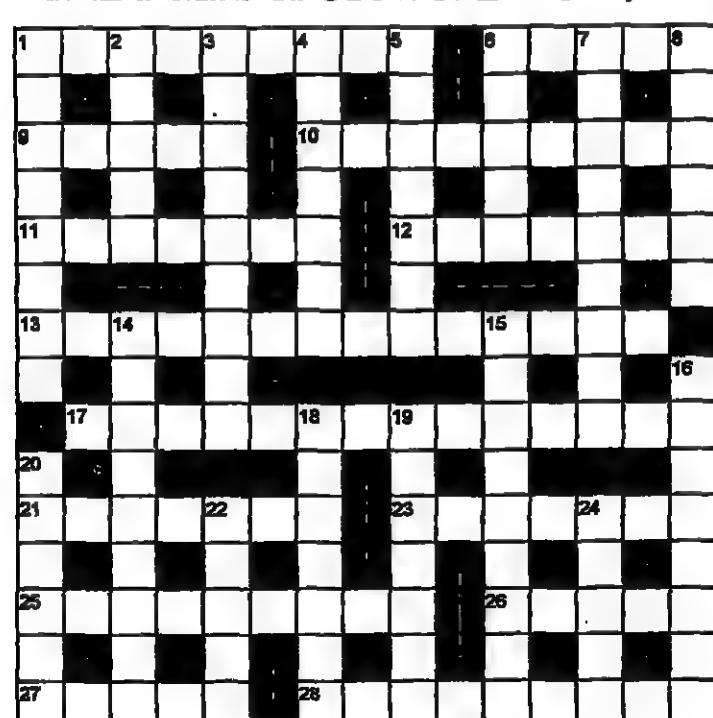
OBITUARIES

Ernest Neal, biologist: John Wilbraham, trumpeter: the Rev John Coventry, Jesuit. Page 21

LETTERS

Bank access, knowledge and skill: South Downs; gay rights; sex offenders; Bishops in Lords; neglected music; St George; Lord Chancellor's wallpaper. Page 19

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,772



- ACROSS**
- 1 It can help us read awkward situation after strike (9).
 - 6 Bring into play spades (king first) to make tricks (5).
 - 9 Penalty in court for offence (5).
 - 10 Maiden in part of summer briefly goes to river (9).
 - 11 It could provide a taller side-shoot (7).
 - 12 Half held in enclosure, confined to one area (7).
 - 13 Ring may be risqué (4,3,7).
 - 17 Ordinary green and gold beds (6,2,6).
 - 21 Diamond ring maiden found in wild shrub (7).
 - 23 Tremble with struggle to restrain naughty child (7).
 - 25 Fit enough to run (9).
 - 26 Some unusual phantoms appear in the beginning (5).
 - 27 Irritable friend of Toad (5).
- DOWN**
- 28 Big noise's achievement in bridge world (5,4).
 - 1 Vital method of communicating most of story to Tom, say (5).
 - 2 Put on the stand (5).
 - 3 Time trial organised? Exactly! (9).
 - 4 For Scots around brae provide guide (7).
 - 5 Run up to a German and do a swap (5,2).
 - 6 Female's left cold and stiff (5).
 - 7 Quit, having lost blood — look off quickly (9).
 - 8 In this way, raise level of spirits? (6).
 - 14 Champion has a game point (9).
 - 15 Show approval of directors giving cover for house (9).
 - 16 Unusual type of service known by a marine (8).
 - 18 Method of feeding began so originally (7).
 - 19 I arrive shattered in holiday destination (7).
 - 20 Support the Queen — it's only right (6).
 - 22 The two year cover provided for farmworkers (5).
 - 24 A Scandinavian keeled over in shock (5).

SARK WETHUSELAH
C A P Y O T O I
O O S L I N E D O I L
R A M N E P K A
P I C K I N G U P O U R
I T I N N Y
O N T H E W A R P A T H
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R T E H E A R T S D E S I R E
A D A G E E L E V A T I O N
N G C L A S S U
C H A I N R E U S E P I E R
I S O N E O S
D I S C R E T E L Y A N T I

Times Two Crossword, page 44

LATEST READ AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

UK Weather: All regions 0336 444 910
UK Roads - All regions 0336 401 410
India F03 0336 401 244
F03 and Link Roads 0336 401 244
National Motorways 0336 401 244
Commercial Europe 0336 401 310
Channel crossing 0336 401 310
Motorway to Heathrow & Gatwick strips 0336 407 808

Weather by Fax

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Vice Country 416 336 N. Ireland 416 341
Wales 416 338 London 416 342
Holland 416 356
Australia 416 337 National Satellite
N. Wales 416 338 Weather 416 397
N. Ireland 416 339
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Inshore Marine Forecast 416 398

World City Weather

183 destinations world wide
5 day forecast 0336 611 216
by Fax (min page) 0336 612 216

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Europe Country by Country 0336 401 882
European fuel costs 0336 401 886
French Motorways 0336 401 887
Support Information 0336 401 882
Disneyland Paris 0336 401 409
Le Touquet 0336 401 995

AA car reports by fax

new and used car reports from the AA motor of 195 cars 0336 416 309

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday: Highest day temp: Kinross, Moray, 16C (61F); lowest day temp: Banon, Derbyshire, 0.2C (32F); highest rainfall: Torbay, Devon, 10.2mm (0.4in); lowest rainfall: Scarborough, North Yorkshire, 0.0mm (0in)

FORECAST

General: Northern Ireland and western Scotland will be cloudy with rain, although brighter weather will spread across the west of Northern Ireland. Eastern Scotland and the western half of England and Wales will also be cloudy with rain spreading east erratically. Central and eastern England will have a warm day with hazy sunshine, but heavy showers are possible in the afternoon. Tonight, mild, with outbreaks of rain spreading east erratically.

London, SE England, E Anglia, E Midlands, E England, Central N and NE England: warm, hazy sunshine, risk of heavy showers in afternoon. Rain will approach from the west late in the day. Moderate southeast breeze. Max 18C (64F).

Central S England, W Midlands, Channel Isles, NW England, Lake District: mainly dry at first but cloud will thicken later with an increasing threat of showers. Moderate to fresh southeast breeze. Max 17C (63F).

SW England, S Wales, N Wales, Isle of Man: dry at first, but becoming mostly cloudy with outbreaks of rain spreading from the west. Fresh to south-southwest breeze. Max 15C (59F).

Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, NE Scotland, Orkney, Shetland: cloud and patchy rain, but occasional sunny spells to the north of high ground. Hear possible on the Tayside and Aberdeenshire coast. Birk southeast wind. Max 14C (57F).

SW Scotland, Glasgow, Central Highlands, Argyll, NW Scotland: cloudy with outbreaks of rain and drizzle. Misty over hills. Fresh south to southeast wind. Max 14C (57F).

N Ireland: mostly cloudy with patchy rain, becoming brighter in the west. Fresh to strong southerly wind. Max 14C (57F).

Irish Republic: some sunshine but a scattering of heavy showers later. Southerly fresh wind. Max 13C (55F).

Outlook: more rain in the east, brighter but showery in the west. Temperatures above average.

AROUND BRITAIN YESTERDAY

4N to 5pm: b=brilliant; c=cloud; d=drizzle; ds=dist storm; du=du; f=fair; fg=fog; g=gale; h=hail; l=light rain; s=showers; st=st; t=t; w=wind; x=unknown; y=yellow; z=z

h=high; l=low; m=moderate; s=sunny; t=t; w=wind; x=unknown; y=yellow; z=z

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MOON TODAY

Changes to chart below from moon: low O and low Q, one complex area of low pressure, will move east and fill; low R will move east-northeast and deepen

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PRIL 22 1998

ADP & TV

an amateur cook puts her in the menu *Chef for a minute* 4.30pm Review: enjoys the final of *Unlunge* Pages 42-43

OPINION

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am is a 57-year-old fau-
Page 19

COLUMNS

JENKINS

Baroness Thatcher does
he left office? She wrote a
hat did Mikhail Gorb-
'He wrote a book, Sir, did
tson, so did General
opl, so did Chris Patten
verybody Page 19

ACINTYRE

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the Jean-Marie Le Pen
extreme right-wing thug
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ertain successor, is a
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RIDDELL

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to the Social
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OBITUARIES

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ovenry, Jewish Page 19

LETTERS

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Downs: gay, the
Bishops in the
astic: St George's
dior's wallpaper Page 19

Commentary, page 25

INSIDE SECTION

2 TODAY



BUSINESS

Miracle cures elude ailing British Biotech PAGE 27



ARTS

Film's odd couple: the strange world of the Coen brothers PAGES 30-32



SPORT

Why McKiernan's rivals are running scared PAGES 37-44

TELEVISION AND RADIO PAGES 42, 43

Tesco to prepare for food spending to falter

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM
RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

TESCO, the leading supermarket group, unveiled bumper annual profits but then sought to dampen any euphoria by issuing a warning that a slowdown in consumer spending is about to hit food sales.

With clothing and household goods retailers already feeling the pinch, Tesco expects food to be the next victim of the reduction in spending. "It is finely balanced at the moment," Andrew Higginson, finance director, said. The company's same-store sales were ahead 6.1 per cent in the year to February 28, but have since edged back to 5 per cent.

Pre-tax profits were 11 per cent up at £532 million, while the chain has further increased its market share from 14.6 to 15.2 per cent. Terry Leahy, chief executive, said the gain had come mainly from the smaller players in the sector.

Tesco, which has infuriated companies such as Levi Strauss by selling their goods at a discount in its stores, plans to continue with the policy of selling branded clothing and electrical items on a "when it's gone, it's gone" basis. More space will be available for such non-food products in the six hypermarkets due to open in the UK this year. There is currently just one Tesco hypermarket, at Pitsea in Essex.

The group is set to open the same number of hypermarkets in Central Europe this year: three in Hungary, two in the Czech Republic and one in Poland. It is also looking at possibilities in the Far East, particularly in Thailand, Taiwan and South Korea. "The economies are being hit hard, but supermarket businesses often do well in a recession, and property prices have come right down," Mr Leahy said. He said Tesco would consider buying an established Far East retailer or developing a new business.

The other area where Tesco, which has gearing of just 31 per cent, may make acquisitions is continental Europe, he said, where the development of the single market is likely to lead to large-scale consolidation in the industry.

Adjusted fully diluted earnings were 26.6p (23.5p) a share and the final dividend is 8.05p, giving a full-year total of 11.6p (10.35p).

Commentary, page 25



Terry Leahy said the increase in Tesco's leading market share had been won at the expense of the smaller players in the food retailing sector

Record mis-selling fine for Sun Life of Canada

By CAROLINE MERRELL

THE Personal Investment Authority (PIA), the regulator, has levied the largest fine so far against a company because of failures in compensating the victims of pensions mis-selling.

In addition to the record fine of £600,000, the PIA has also charged Sun Life of Canada costs of £125,000. Half the fine relates directly to Sun Life of Canada policyholders, while the other half concerns pension clients of Confederation Life, which was acquired by Sun Life of Canada four years ago.

The PIA also reprimanded

the life insurer over the conduct of the review, which is part of an industry-wide campaign to compensate those who were encouraged to give up rights to occupational schemes and to take out personal pensions.

According to the regulator, Sun Life of Canada had failed to trace approximately 3,900 investors for whom there was no current address, while Confederation Life had relied on an external mailing house to chase up investors, as well as mistakenly omitting 30,000 rebate-only cases from the review. Rebate-only cases are where the pension contributions are simply a rebate of

national insurance contributions from the Government.

The PIA claimed the findings were because of a weakness in the plans for carrying out the pensions review project.

Maurice Bates, senior vice-president of Sun Life, said: "The company is disappointed at the size of the fine in relation to the charge." The life insurer is reviewing 27,000 cases from a total of 300,000 personal pensions sold.

Mr Bates said the company accepted the findings of the regulator, but added he thought the size of the fine was linked to the financial strength of the company's Canadian parent. The company has £78

billion under management worldwide, including £10 billion in the UK.

He said: "Our on-going commitment as acknowledged by the PIA, is demonstrated by the fact that since February 1997, Sun Life of Canada has substantially increased the resources dedicated to the review. We have some 200 people, equivalent to 17 per cent of head office staff, dedicated to speedy resolution of the review."

Sun Life of Canada has made provisions of £171 million against pensions mis-selling in its accounts. Mr Bates refused to comment yesterday on whether it would

have to raise its mis-selling provisions.

The pensions review has so far focused on priority cases of mis-selling. Earlier this year, the Financial Services Authority, the new super regulator, extended the scope of the review to include non-priority cases. Mr Bates said that £40 million of the £171 million provision was to cope with the extension of the review. Some analysts believe industry provision will have to double to cope with non-priority, or Phase II, cases.

The latest fine brings the total levied against companies that failed to properly compensate victims of pension mis-selling to £3 million.

Governor hints that rates have peaked

By ALASDAIR MURRAY
ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

EDDIE GEORGE last night dropped a strong hint that interest rates have peaked, claiming there are "encouraging signs" that the economy is beginning to slow sufficiently to ensure that inflation remains under control.

The comments by the Governor of the Bank of England will offer hope to manufacturers that the pound is set to continue its decline from recent nine-year highs.

Mr George told the Cranfield University Business School of Management that while he appreciated the "hammering" exporters are taking because of the pound's high level, sterling's strength had provided more time for the fiscal and monetary tightening already in place to feed through to the economy.

However, he refused to explicitly rule out a further rise. He said that the Monetary Policy Committee could not be "blessed with perfect foresight" and that it was natural at this stage of the cycle for disagreements to emerge over the need for a "marginal further tightening".

The pound slid two and a half pence against the mark to close at DM3.00, some 10 pence below the nine-year peak reached last month. On its trade weighted index, sterling slipped from 107.0 to 106.3. Dealers said the pound had lost ground because unexpectedly strong German monetary data had revived speculation that the Bundesbank might raise interest rates before monetary union.

There was little support from inflation figures that showed underlying inflation, which excludes mortgage interest payments, remaining at 2.6 per cent in March, just above its target level. Headline inflation reached an annual rate of 3.5 per cent against 3.4 per cent in February.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	5955.0	(+0.8)
Yield	2.75%	(5.0254)
FTSE All share	2731.50	(+2.03)
Nikkei	15825.87	(+128.57)
New York	6148.07	(+6.23)
Dow Jones	1123.83	(+0.18)
S&P Composite		

FEDERAL FUNDS

Federal Funds	5.5%	(5.4%)
Long Bond	102.1%	(102.1%)
Yield	5.94%	(5.93%)

5-YEAR TREASURY

5-year Treasury	7.1%	(7.1%)
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LIFE LONG GILT

Life long gilt	100%	(100%)
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NEW YORK

New York	1.6788	(1.6788)
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LONDON

London	1.6784	(1.6788)
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DM

DM	10.0800	(10.1400)
----	---------	-----------

FF

FF	2.4917	(2.5084)
----	--------	----------

YEN

Yen	220.12	(221.95)
-----	--------	----------

S&P

S&P	106.3	(107.0)
-----	-------	---------

NEW YORK

New York	1.7888	(1.8010)
----------	--------	----------

DM

DM	6.9965	(6.0355)
----	--------	----------

FF

FF	1.4818	(1.4895)
----	--------	----------

YEN

Yen	131.50	(131.85)
-----	--------	----------

S&P

S&P	106.3	(106.5)
-----	-------	---------

Tokyo close Yen 131.54

Brent 15-day (Jul) \$15.00 (\$14.70)

WGC

London close	\$98.25	(\$97.85)
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* denotes midday trading price

GKN lands £2bn consortium deal

A EUROPEAN consortium that includes GKN, the UK engineering company, has won £2 billion contract to develop and manufacture a new generation of armoured vehicles.

The consortium also includes Krauss-Maffei and Rheinmetall, of Germany, and Giat of France. It outbid a second group, called TEAM International, whose members included Vickers and Alvis, both of Britain.

Ireland leapfrogs UK in competitiveness league

By ALASDAIR MURRAY
ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

IRELAND has overtaken the UK in world league table of economic performance, according to an authoritative ranking list published yesterday. The UK slipped from 11th to 12th while Ireland climbed from 15th to 14th in the annual competitiveness league compiled by the International Institute of Management Development.

The small decline in the UK's

performance, which follows a climb from 19th last year, was attributed to the strength of the pound, which harmed the country's competitiveness. Ireland's strong economic growth rate and increasing internationalisation has helped it rise up the table.

The USA topped the league with the IMD saying only complacency or a major stockmarket crash could threaten a situation that is "historically exceptional". Japan, however, slipped from ninth to 18th as its economic problems worsened.

Shell breaks ranks in global warming rift

By CARL MORTISHED
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

SHELL has cancelled its membership of Global Climate Coalition, a US energy industry lobby group, because it disagrees with the organisation's aggressive campaign against measures aimed at reducing global warming.

The move by the world's largest oil company follows BP's resignation from the organisation a year ago and exposes a widening rift between Euro-

pean and American oil companies over the issue of carbon dioxide emissions.

The pressure group — based in Washington and counting Exxon and Mobil among its members — opposes implementation in the US of Kyoto summit targets for cutting greenhouse gases. It has called attempts to cut US CO₂ emissions "economic disarmament".

Mark Moody-Stuart, Shell chairman, said there were enough indications to justify precautionary action on CO₂.

Commentary, page 25

M&C Saatchi sells a night at the opera

By JASON NISSÉ

THE financially troubled Royal Opera House — whose chief executive, Mary Allen, resigned last month after less than a year in the job — has turned for help to M&C Saatchi, the advertising agency headed by Lord Saatchi and his brother Charles.

The agency has been drafted in by Judy Graham, the new head of marketing who was appointed by Ms Allen. In February Ms Allen fired

Keith Cooper, the head of publicity at the ROH whose sacking of a subordinate was caught on camera by the BBC. The incident was then shown as part of the 1996 documentary about the ROH, *The House*.

The chief executive's position is currently vacant, putting more pressure on Sir Colin Southgate, the newly appointed chairman. He is also executive chairman of EMI, the music company that

is reported to be in discussions with Seagram, the Canadian drinks and entertainment business, about an agreed bid.

A series of advertisements made by M&C Saatchi are to run initially on Classic FM and are aimed at drumming up business for the ROH's current series at the Albert Hall — the opera house in Covent Garden being closed for refurbishment and not due to reopen until next year.

M&C Saatchi is hoping to attract a wider audience for the ROH, winning some of the middle class customers who tend to feel more comfortable at its rival, the English National Opera.

The first adverts will promote *La Traviata*, which M&C Saatchi will describe as "a rollercoaster of emotion", inviting comparisons with the recent comings and goings among the executives of the opera company.



Lord Saatchi: using radio

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Somerfield chief seizes Kwik Save

David Simons, chief executive of Somerfield, is taking personal control of the newly acquired Kwik Save for the next year in a boardroom shake-up involving the departure of two directors.

Derek Pretty, finance director of Kwik Save, is to step down. He had been guaranteed a managing director position as managing director of Kwik Save after the £1.7 billion merger with Somerfield. David Coles, Somerfield's marketing director, is also going. He had been guaranteed his job after the merger.

Tony O'Neil, operations director of Somerfield, keeps his job and will take the same role in Kwik Save, according to Mr Simons. Graeme Bowler, chief executive of Kwik Save, had already agreed to retire.

Overseas deal

United Overseas Group, the distributor of branded consumer goods, is paying £225 million for Inter-Trade Agencies, a Dutch distributor. In its first acquisition since flotation a year ago, United yesterday reported a 33 per cent rise in 1997 pre-tax profits, to £8.4 million. Adjusted earnings per share rose 9 per cent, to 4.39p. A 0.76p final dividend makes 1.44p.

Rouble move

Chicago Mercantile Exchange yesterday launched futures and options contracts on the Russian rouble, the first available outside Russia. The exchange said that the fall in Russian inflation from 2,324 per cent in 1992 to 1 per cent in 1997 and the direct investment pouring into former state-run businesses had fuelled demand for a hedge on the Russian currency.

Limit buys

Limit, the Lloyd's of London investment trust, is to pay £41.1 million for the 35 per cent interest that it does not already own in Bankside Insurance Holdings, the Lloyd's integrated vehicle owning Bankside Syndicates, a Lloyd's managing agency.

TUC chief under fire as cracks appear over union recognition

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

THE TUC compromise offered over union recognition was yesterday thrown into doubt as rifts opened up in the trade union movement.

John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, was accused by union leaders of overstepping his authority in signalling a willingness to accept thresholds for recognition ballots, while the Scottish TUC, meeting in Perth, rejected the compromise in a unanimous vote. The TUC leader had hoped to establish a more conciliatory position before the decision that is expected soon from the Prime Minister. Union leaders believe they will be summoned to No 10 within 24 hours notice. Union leaders accused Mr

Monks of exceeding his authority by publicly stating that there should be a threshold of staff in a workplace voting in favour of union recognition — rather than just a majority of those voting — before recognition could be accepted. The row could cause a rift between the unions and the Government.

Rodney Bickerstaff, general secretary of Unison, said: "Tony Blair said in Edinburgh of the Scottish referendum 'there will be no fancy tricks, no special majorities — a simple majority of those voting will be enough'. I hope he feels the same way when he puts pen to the White Paper [on union recognition]."

The Government is thought likely to endorse employers' demands for a majority turnout requirement rather than a simple majority in a ballot for union recognition. It is also expected to back demands from the Confederation of British Industry that small firms be exempted from recognition laws.

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB union, said: "No-one explained to me that there was a cunning double meaning when I sat through those long debates on employment law at the Labour Party conference just before the election... it all sounds like a rewriting of history to me."

Roger Lyons, head of the MSF union said that voters had not backed "any fine-tuning arrangement" of the manifesto pledge. He told delegates: "Our campaign must be intensified over the next few days."

The demands from the trade unions were also backed by Ian Davidson, Labour MP for Glasgow Pollok and the secretary of the parliamentary trade union group, who said: "There was no qualification in the manifesto about size."

Souter keeps the red flag flying

TRADE unionists were treated to a version of the Red Flag they hadn't heard before — from the privatised bus and rail tycoon Brian Souter, chairman of Stagecoach.

To the delight of delegates the former bus conductor mocked the Labour of Blair and Brown singing: "New

Labour has a wide appeal too aw [to all] push an arty" before giving a potted history of his beginnings in the bus industry and as a member of the T&G. "At 18 years I made a start, wis in a cauld December," he sang. "A big conductor said tae me, best be a union member. The meetings

wir at dead o'night, the Shop Steward he wis dynamite, but boy could he negotiate. He could cut the hours and raised the rate." Stagecoach, he said would always recognise unions, finishing his song: "It's kind of yees tae lead an ear. But keep the red flag flying here."

Eurofighter set to lose dogfight for UAE order

FROM OLIVER AUGUST IN NEW YORK

THE Eurofighter, built by British Aerospace and other European defence companies, is poised to lose its first big sales battle. A \$6 billion (£3.6 billion) order from the United Arab Emirates, billed as the "sale of the century", is expected to go to a consortium led by Lockheed Martin, the US defence company.

The order for about 75 planes had been a major focus for the Eurofighter consortium. But US defence insiders are now certain that Lockheed has clinched a deal for its F-16 plane.

Crown Prince Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan will visit the White House in May. During the visit he is expected to announce the deal, allowing President Clinton to take some of the credit.

Details are believed to have been ironed out during a meeting last week between the chief of staff of the UAE military and William Cohen, the US defence secretary, who is in the Middle East. The deal will be a major

setback for the Eurofighter and BAE. During the long fight for support from investors and governments for the Eurofighter jet, executives insisted that the F-16 would be no match for it and that the two planes could not be compared.

A defence analyst in London said: "It looks like Eurofighter lost. That's bitter. They really needed this deal." For Eurofighter production to be profitable, it needs significant foreign sales, he added.

The setback will hit the Eurofighter, particularly hard after the difficulties it has had in holding European governments to their promised orders. In September, Germany is likely to elect a government of Social Democrats and Greens who have opposed the Eurofighter.

The Eurofighter is being built by companies in Britain, Germany, Italy and Spain. BAE said yesterday that it believed no decision had yet been made in the UAE.



Mail mission: Brian Edwards, left, and Miles Emley

Even more over 50s not looking for work

BY JANET BUSH
ECONOMICS EDITOR

THE Employment Policy Institute, Britain's leading labour market think-tank, today provides new figures showing a dramatic rise in those over 50 who are no longer actively engaged in looking for work.

In an article in the EPI's latest *Employment Audit*, Jonathan Wadsworth and Paul Gregg, both with the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, reveal that the proportion of men over 50 who are "economically inactive" has risen from less than 7 per cent in 1975 to 28 per cent in 1997.

Mr Gregg, who also serves on the Chancellor's Council of Economic Advisers, believes that a new deal for the older generation should now be put firmly on the Government's agenda.

The new research shows a dramatic decline in economic inactivity among women in their child-rearing years. In 1981, 73 per cent of women with a youngest child of less than a year old were economically inactive. By last year, this had fallen to less than 50 per cent.

However, the decrease is concentrated among women with working partners who can afford the childcare that is currently on offer. There has been little change in the numbers of lone mothers or women with non-working partners who are inactive.

Janet Bush, page 27

St Ives goes shopping with £22m

BY CHRIS AYRES

ST IVES, the printing group, wants to increase its share of the booming junk mail market and has about £22 million in cash to help fund acquisitions.

The company yesterday reported a 3 per cent rise in pre-tax profits, from £23.6 million to £24.2 million, for the six months to January 30. Turnover fell 2 per cent to £179.6 million, from £183.6 million. Its acquisition strategy could also call on a significant borrowing facility, although there were no deals in the pipeline.

Miles Emley, chairman, said sales had been affected by translating foreign earnings from its overseas operations. St Ives had not been hit by sterling because most of its divisions served local markets, he added.

Mr Emley said he hoped that St Ives, where Brian Edwards is managing director, would benefit from the acquisition by Investcorp of its rivals, Watmoughs and British Printing Corporation. The rationalisation would help prices.

Earnings rose 3 per cent to 16.27p a share. The interim dividend rises to 3.75p, from 3.4p, due on June 5.

Tempos, page 26

TOURIST RATES

	Bank	Bank
	Buys	Sells
Australia \$	2.28	2.30
Austria Sch	22.09	20.40
Belgium Fr	64.95	59.39
Canada \$	2.351	2.333
Cyprus Cyp£	0.920	0.949
Denmark Kr	12.00	11.11
Finland Mk	9.86	8.89
France Fr	10.50	9.72
Germany Dm	3.15	2.92
Greece Dr	348	354
Hong Kong \$	13.81	12.61
Iceland	132	112
Ireland P£	1.24	1.15
Israel Sh	8.65	8.00
Italy Lira	3138	2901
Japan Yen	234.59	217.05
Malta	0.688	0.593
Netherlands Gld	3.592	3.267
New Zealand \$	3.14	2.90
Norway Kr	13.04	12.10
Portugal Esc	319.80	297.77
S Africa Rd	9.15	8.19
Spain Pta	265.30	247.01
Sweden Kr	13.69	12.59
Switzerland Fr	2.64	2.42
Turkey Lira	4100.00	3861.11
USA \$	1.782	1.639

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Prudential decline sends shares lower

DIFFICULTIES with its UK direct sales force, slack sales in the US and economic turmoil in Asia depressed the Prudential's new business figures yesterday and sent shares falling 15p to 80.2p. In the first three months of this year, sales through Prudential's direct sales force were up 2 per cent through premium products, to £477 million, but regular single premium products, to £56 million.

Total group single premiums rose 8 per cent to £1.9 billion and regular premiums were down 3 per cent at £124 million. In the UK, there was good news from the Scottish Amicable, businesses and the independent financial adviser division, but Prudential, criticised in the pensions mis-selling scandal, said reorganisation of training and the moratorium on recruitment had cut the direct sales team. **Commentary, page 25**

Norwich Union boosted

THE impact of the Budget and new enthusiasm for investment among the public boosted Norwich Union's new life business in the first quarter. Much of the 22 per cent rise in worldwide business came from business through independent financial advisers in the UK, which rose 33 per cent. The new business advisers in the UK, which rose 33 per cent, the new business in annual premium equivalent of £88 million rose 14 per cent in the three-month period (£77 million). New single-premium life and investment business increased 33 per cent to £480 million.

BTR buys Italian stake

BTR, the engineering company, has recruited Fiat to its list of international clients through an agreement to pay £41 million for a 70 per cent stake in Saisang, an Italian company that produces rubber sealing parts for cars. In Italy, Saisang is the largest competitor to BTR's own car sealing division and also has factories in China, Poland and France. It has assets of £49 million and last year generated sales of £95 million. BTR has the option to raise its stake in three years' time.

Support grows for euro

SUPPORT for the euro among UK chief executives has risen substantially during the past year, a new survey published today shows. Over two thirds of UK chief executives believe the euro will have a positive impact in Britain compared with just 26 per cent a year ago. Francois Charriere, partner in charge of European Affairs at Andersen Consulting, said a combination of the "Blair effect" and a pragmatic approach to the euro had prompted the shift in opinion.

Sterling worry at Jerome

JEROME, the textiles group, has told the market that its margins are being hit by sterling's strength, making it "extremely difficult to anticipate the outcome for the year". The warning sent the shares down 2½p to 47½p. Pre-tax profits for the year to December 31, after restructuring costs, fell from £1.14 million to £566,000. Turnover rose by 7 per cent, to £38.7 million. Earnings per share remained at 5.2p. The final dividend rises from 2p to 2.25p, due on June 5, making 3.375p.

UCG hit by halt to talks

SHARES in United Carriers Group fell 14p to 44½p on news that merger talks begun after the troubled parcels company received an approach on February 24 have lapsed. The company expects its results for the first half of the year to show a loss, after higher-than-expected costs and more severe disruptions to services than anticipated caused by the repositioning of the UK parcels network as a next day carrier. In the last full financial year pre-tax profits were £2.2 million.

Havelock warning

HAVELOCK Europa shares fell 25p to 120p, a three-year low, after the maker of interiors for shops and banks gave warning that its profits margins "have come under severe pressure". It blamed the soaring pound for the loss of contracts in the Middle East. A slowdown in orders from the Bank of Scotland left 1997 pre-tax profits at £6.02 million, up just 2 per cent. Earnings were 14.8p (14.6p) a share. A final dividend of 3p makes a 4.75p (4.3p) total.

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هكذا من الاول

Leahy leaps a yawning gap

COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Tesco shares slithered down a few pence on the back of figures that would have engendered huge enthusiasm were they to be unveiled by virtually any other retailer. Perhaps the reaction was in part due to the company's deliberate warning that UK shoppers could soon curb their appetites but it was an unreasonable response. Behind its determination not to over-excite expectations lies a determination to continue to outstrip the competition.

Terry Leahy's downbeat style has occasioned a chorus of yawns from profile writers who fail to divine any charisma behind his obsession with customer service. But who needs charisma if he can produce a real growth of 4 per cent in a market that many had dismissed as close to saturation years ago?

Leahy may favour a quiet approach but his enthusiasm for his company is every bit as intense as was that of Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth, who appointed him as his successor. And Leahy is every bit as driven as was MacLaurin to make his mark on Tesco.

Acknowledging that growth in the home market will become harder is spurring him to look abroad and there are strong hints that Tesco could soon take

the plunge into Asia. Brave companies in every sector are now viewing the Far East as ripe for a bit of bottom fishing, buying companies at rock bottom prices in bombed-out markets. There are still an awful lot of people to feed out there and Tesco's experience in central Europe would be a useful background to moving into other markets where luxury food is still little more than a white sliced loaf.

The development programme in central Europe is evidence of how the potential returns in that region are being viewed by the number crunchers at Tesco's Cheshunt headquarters. The company tried France but did the sensible thing and sold up when the prices of French supermarkets reached sky high prices. Similarly, it has steered clear of the United States, where competition keeps profits in check. But, despite his caution over the prospects for the home market, Tesco's growth is not yet done. The team that MacLaurin assembled has an edge over the competition. Sainsbury has not yet succeeded in struggling off

the bureaucracy that built up under Lord John's tenure and Sainsbury is in a parlous state after years of underinvestment. Leahy and his men have the ideas and the chance to race ahead of the competition and implement them. Shareholders can afford to overlook the charisma count and concentrate on the returns.

Shell auditions as the prodigal son

Corporate Colonel Blimps must be ordering extra stiff pink gins at club bars all round St James's to get over the shock. Who would have thought it? Of all the companies they thought they could rely on to stand out against the modern world, to stand up to the last for traditional lack of values, you

could always be sure of Shell. Wherever in the world there was some sensitive environmental, political or social issue, Shell would be there, gallantly missing the point. But the ghastly rumour appears to be true. There is no loyalty among dinosaurs these days. Even Shell has gone over to them, has gone soft, has cynically opted for survival.

To be sure, there is a slip twist glossy corporate responsibility strategy and reality. But Shell has clearly made a commitment. Campaigners know that is likely to prove much more significant than the enthusiasm of pioneers such as Body Shop. Somewhere out in the wilderness, the fatted calf may even be readied if Shell acts on such principles.

After the bruising encounters with its customers over the fate of the Brent Spar and the unhappy state of Ogoniland, Shell has learnt that the good intentions of its bureaucrats are not enough. In modern marketing, methods of production are likely to be as important a part of the product as its qualities in use, especially when the chief product is just a branded commodity.

So credible consultants have been called in for a full corporate makeover. Shell is far too sophisticated to believe that it can get away with a skin-deep PR stunt. The consultants would have told the board anyway. As Body Shop and others have discovered, if you parade yourself as a good citizen, critics will redouble their efforts to uncover your pathetic fallibility. Unfair as it may be, accountability can intensify controversy rather than dissipate it.

Disaster lies in thinking you are right all along and all you need to do is communicate better. Unless Shell makes its good

citizen commitment central to its decision-making, it will be in more trouble. The dividends, if any, come much later: creating goodwill that will persuade customers to forgive the mistakes any such multinational is bound to make.

Give an insurer a bad name...

Sun Life of Canada clearly adopted a remarkably cavalier attitude to accusations that it had mis-sold personal pensions and exhortations to compensate the victims. But is it reasonable to believe that a fine totting up to £725,000 will change the way it behaves?

Company cultures run deep and are not changed easily, as Sir Peter Davis, chief executive of Prudential, knows only too well. His organisation has escaped being fined by the lucky happenstance — or was it foresight — of his predecessor having chosen to have the Pru regulated by the SIB rather than the FIA. The Pru was slow in setting about righting the pension

wrongs it had wrought but is now determinedly doing so. More radically, it is also intent on changing attitudes throughout the organisation, not for fear of fines but because of a perceived threat to its business.

The bad publicity meted out by the stridently "naming and shaming" Treasury minister, Helen Liddell, may be beginning to influence customers.

More crucially, financial services providers run the risk of being effectively blacklisted by the Government if they fail to acquit themselves well in the aftermath of the pensions debacle. The new big idea of benchmarking financial products will surely have to take account of the character of the provider as well as what it is selling.

The going rate

EDDIE GEORGE has always insisted that he is not divorced from goings-on in the real economy but is he prepared for the deal on the table at Vauxhall, which ties pay to sterling's rate against the mark? Will his legendary single-mindedness help him to cope with militant carworkers on Threadneedle Street, picketing the Monetary Policy Committee to cut interest rates? Central banking will never be the same.

PolyGram income slumps

PolyGram, the Dutch entertainment group in which Philips holds a controlling stake, yesterday reported a slump in first-quarter pre-tax income from 192 million guilders (£36 million) to 36 million guilders. The company, home to artists such as U2 and Hanson, issued a warning last month that problems in Asia and a lack of big names in its first-quarter music release schedule would hit sales and profits.

Last year, U2 sold almost five million copies of their album *Pop* in the first quarter. PolyGram's overall sales rose slightly to 2.3 billion guilders. This year only two albums, from All Saints and Andrea Bocelli, sold more than a million copies. Later in the year, albums are expected from established artists such as Boyzone and Sheryl Crow.

BICC deal

BICC is restructuring in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, taking full control of its cable interests from Metal Manufacturers (MM), its 61 per cent owned subsidiary. MM will sell to BICC its cable assets in Australia, New Zealand and Asia, leaving it as an integrated electrical and building products group. In return, BICC will cancel 70 million of its 116.4 million MM shares and will pay MM up to £48.4 million in cash. The total consideration is estimated at £106.8 million.

Hanson sale

Hanson, the building materials company, has completed the disposal of the road paving businesses of its Spectrum Construction subsidiary to Colas for \$92 million (£55 million). The sale completes Hanson's disposal of Spectrum after the sale of its heavy industrial construction businesses to Skanska this month.

Crisp jobs

Golden Wonder, the crisps manufacturer, is to invest £30 million in factories in Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire, and Corby, Northamptonshire, creating more than 100 jobs. Golden Wonder is Britain's second-biggest supplier of crisps.

Leschly ends hopes of resurrecting Glaxo deal

By ROBERT COLE, CITY CORRESPONDENT

JAN LESCHLY, chief executive of SmithKline Beecham, yesterday dashed lingering hopes that the aborted £110 billion mega-merger with Glaxo Wellcome could be revived.

Mr Leschly said: "In theory you could talk about the merger still coming about but in reality it will not happen." At the same time he blamed the collapse of the merger — which if successful would have created the world's second largest company — at the feet of Glaxo.

He said that a merger of the kind envisaged would have depended on trust and confidence. Mr Leschly said that SB's trust and confidence in any possible deal collapsed when Glaxo walked away from talks in late February.

His comments came as he presented first-quarter results which showed small increases in pre-tax profits, earnings per share, and the dividend.

The results disappointed some observers but the share price reaction — down 40p at 691p — came largely as a result of Mr Leschly's comments on the merger.

Nearly 21 million shares in SB were traded yesterday, making it the most heavily traded share of the day. The

5.5 per cent decline takes the price down to where it was at the start of the year, before the serious talk of any merger was mooted. Shares in Glaxo also fell, but less dramatically, by 4p to £16.44.

Mr Leschly expressed confidence that the firm could thrive as an independent. He said 39 per cent of all its pharmaceutical sales were of drugs developed in the last five years.

He also said that spending on research and development would grow by between 16 and 17 per cent, and approach £1 billion in total.

SB's pre-tax profits for the three months to March 31 grew 8 per cent to £440 million. Mr Leschly said that the mild winter weather had hit sales of the Beecham range of flu treatments and that the figures were also adversely impacted by exchange rate movements.

Had it not been for currencies pre-tax profits would have risen 12 per cent to £457 million, the company said. Earnings per share for the quarter were 5.2p, against 4.9p last time, and the dividend is lifted 10 per cent to 4.425p.

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Jan Leschly blamed Glaxo for the merger collapse

Rank share price slips on trading statement

By DOMINIC WALSH

SHARES in Rank, the Butler's to Hard Rock Café group, shed some of their recent gains yesterday as dealers reacted negatively to a cautious first-quarter trading statement.

The company said that operating profits from continuing operations were up 5 per cent to £21 million, but pre-tax profits were down due to the absence of last year's £9 million dividend from Rank Xerox. Turnover was up 7 per cent to £400 million.

A spokeswoman for Rank said the first three months of the year were traditionally the company's quietest due to the seasonality of most of its businesses, pointing out that it had made a full-year operating profit of £310 million in 1997. "All the things we said at the pre-earnings press conference still stand," she said.

City dealers did not agree, however, marking the shares 23p lower at 381p after a steady rise from a low of 297p in February. One analyst said: "The market is concerned that a number of divisions appear to be declining on a like-for-like basis."

An exception was the Odeon cinema business, which saw a 34 per cent rise in admissions.

Tempos, page 26

MEPC sells its American malls for £520m

By CARL MORTISHED

MEPC has agreed to sell its US shopping centres to General Growth Properties for \$871 million (£520 million).

The sale of the eight malls brings the property company close to its objective, outlined last autumn, of shedding its overseas assets and returning some £300 million to shareholders.

General Growth, a \$2 billion real estate investment trust, is buying the eight properties at a 9 per cent premium to their book value at September 30. The portfolio includes the Northridge Fashion Center, badly damaged in the last Los Angeles earthquake.

James Tuckey, chief executive of MEPC, said that the company was negotiating with another buyer for its remaining American industrial and office properties, which have a book value of about \$300 million. The sale of these would leave MEPC with more than \$1 billion, of which half would be used to redeem its American commercial paper programme and other borrowings.

Mr Tuckey said: "We are now well on the way to completing the successful implementation of the reorganisation of the group. Our efforts

are now focused solely on the UK, where we have been exceptionally busy in recent months, notably with the £247 million acquisition of BSI, the development of Woolgate Exchange in the City and the expansion of our industrial and office portfolios." MEPC shares rose by 8p to a new high of 611p.

Tempos, page 26

Argos given bid boost

ARGOS's hopes of escaping the clutches of Great Universal Stores, which is making a £1.9 million hostile bid for the catalogue showroom group, received a boost yesterday when two key institutional shareholders said they would reject the GUS bid (Sarah Cunningham writes).

Baillie Gifford, the Edinburgh fund manager which holds a 4.8 per cent stake in Argos, and Prudential, which has a 6.5 per cent stake, have confirmed that they will back the present management.

Home Counties falls to ECNG bid

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

EASTERN Counties Newspapers, publisher of the *Eastern Daily Press*, yesterday won control of Home Counties Newspapers, best known for the *Hampstead* and *Highgate Express* weekly, with a £58.3 million bid.

The bid, which has already been accepted by shareholders controlling more than 60 per cent of the stock, appears to end the attempt by Johnston Press to buy Home Counties.

The ECNG offer of 560p a share, made through its Orient Publishing subsidiary, represents a 12 per cent premium to the 500p offer made by Johnston in December and offers a 25.8 per cent premium over the Home Counties closing

price on April 17. The Johnston bid was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission earlier this year because of concerns about overlapping titles between the two groups.

Regulatory problems with the ECNG bid are unlikely. The titles of the two groups do not overlap and executives said the combined circulation of paid-for titles is just below the 500,000 threshold that would trigger an automatic investigation.

The majority of ECNG titles are in East Anglia while Home Counties papers circulate in Greater London, Essex, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Reuters price hit by pound and Far East

SHARES in Reuters fell 34p to 619p after the international news and information group revealed it was still being adversely affected by turmoil in the Far East and the strong pound (Raymond Snoddy writes).

Shareholders were told at the company's annual meeting that first quarter revenues had risen by an underlying 7 per cent but that the effect of the strong pound had reduced actual growth to 2 per cent. Revenue for the quarter had risen to £715 million, compared with £699 million in the first quarter of the previous year.

Revenue in Asia fell by 5 per cent at actual rates but showed underlying growth of 4 per cent.

BBA pays £174m for Veratec in US

By ROBERT COLE, CITY CORRESPONDENT

BBA, the engineer, has bought Veratec, a synthetic fabric maker in the US, for £174 million. Veratec makes specialist non-woven materials for use in the production of items such as nappies and sanitary towels. Veratec will be bolted on to BBA's existing operations in the sector and increase sales by about 25 per cent, or £150 million.

The purchase price is equivalent to 12 times Veratec's operating profits for 1997, and 1.1 times total sales for last year. The deal will take BBA debt to £290 million and the gearing ratio to about 90 per cent.

Roberto Quarta, chief executive of BBA, said that disposals, coupled with the fact that

the company generates good levels of cash, would help to reduce debt. He agreed that the sale price was "high" but added that the US company was solid enough to warrant the price.

Operating profit margin at Veratec is about 10 per cent but Mr Quarta expects to be able to increase this and has forecast that the deal will be earnings enhancing this year.

The stock market received the news positively. Shares in BBA rose by nearly 5 per cent — or 20p — to close at 442p. The shares have tripled in value over the last five years, at the same time outperforming the market average by 35 per cent.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Stock Market Writer
of the YearInflation news brings
shares back up to 5,900

GOOD news on the inflation front and a positive start to trading on Wall Street enabled the stock market to claw back some hefty falls to close virtually unchanged.

The FTSE 100, down almost 70 points at the start, found much needed support around the 5,900 level. It then moved into positive territory helped by opening gains for the Dow Jones industrial average on the back of some bullish results. In the event, it closed 0.9 up at 5,955.0 as 919 million shares changed hands.

BP was one of the heaviest traded stocks among the top 100 with the price bounding 34.5p to 922p cheered by positive trading news from Exxon in the US.

There was also demand for Ladbroke, up 12.5p to 340.5p, as the appearance of a few buyers caught the market short of stock.

Brokers who had dived into SmithKline Beecham on Monday were counting the cost after the price dived 40p to 691p. It was the heaviest traded stock among the top 100 with almost 21 million shares changing hands.

But Zeneca managed a rise of 21p to £25.21 after obtaining the license from Shionogi of Japan to commercially develop statin ZD4522, its treatment for reducing cholesterol.

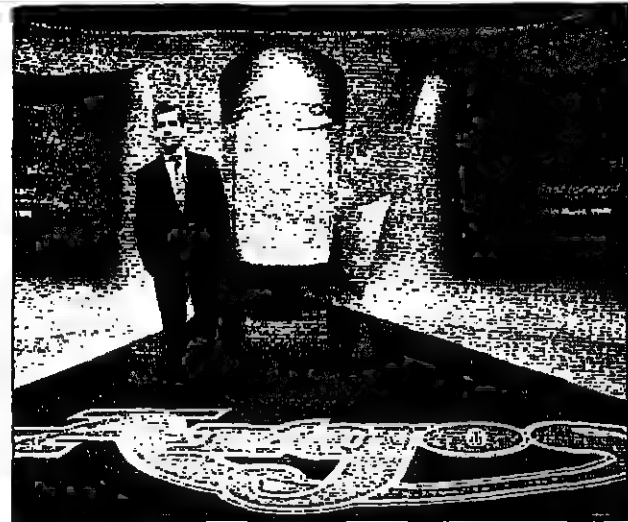
The trading update from Rank Group went down with brokers like a lead balloon and the price responded with a fall of 19.5p to 385p.

Argos retreated 20p to 610p after several institutional investors rejected the 650p a share offer from Great Universal Stores. They include Baillie Gifford, the Edinburgh fund manager, with 6.6 per cent of the shares and Prudential Corporation with almost 7 per cent.

Jefferson Smurfit, the paper manufacturer, was unchanged at 195.5. A spokesman for the company dismissed claims doing the rounds in Dublin that the group may be ready to fulfil promises to enhance shareholder value by bidding for the outstanding minority of its US subsidiary.

Bowthorpe eased 1.5p to 476p ahead of a three-day visit by brokers and fund managers to three different states in the US starting on Monday. The company is expected to have good news.

Speculative buying continued to hoist EMI Group a



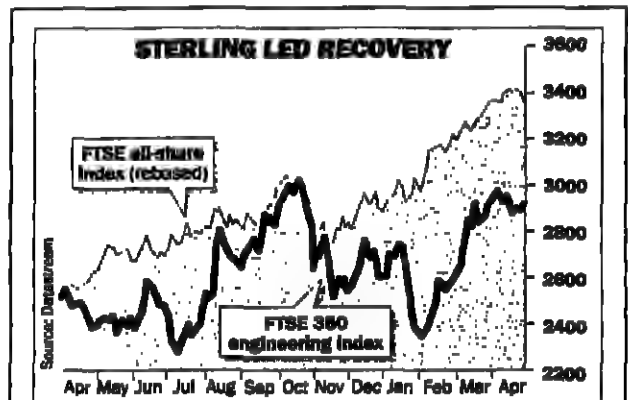
Stuart Rose, chief executive of Argos, saw its price drop 20p as some institutions backed his defence against GUS

further 10p to 500p. Word is the group may be in bid talks with Segarm. Orange, retreated 8p to 412p with Société Générale telling clients to "sell". Dealers claim that SBC Warburg Dillon Read, the broker, has now placed the remainder of the 16 per cent stake in the company it bought from British Aerospace.

The acquisition of Veratex in

the US for \$290 million was seen as a good move for BBA Group which responded with a rise of 18.5p to 443p. Greig Middleton, the broker, has set a target price of 500p.

Home Counties, the local newspaper publisher, rose 7.5p to 560p to match a recommended offer of 560p a share from rival Eastern Counties Newspapers. Home



A FALLING pound on the foreign exchange markets is a rare event these days, so Britain's engineers were making the most of yesterday's hiccup. More of the same was the request as TI Group raced ahead 18.5p to 542.5p, GKN 50p to £16.90 and British Steel gained 3p to 150.4p.

Peter Caldwell at Nikko, the Japanese securities house, says the December year-end reporting season had been firm with the exception of Vickers. It profited at 235p. Other companies such as BAE, GKN and TI confirmed they were

on track. The sector performed well during February and March, but fell back this month, worried by the strong pound and the Asian crisis.

Mr Caldwell said: "UK engineering remains at levels not seen since 1992 when the sector was emerging from recession. There is no compelling reason for the raising to improve, but the historically low level suggests limited downside due to a weakening rating."

A further downturn in the pound's fortunes would provide a much needed boost.

Counties has chosen to reject a higher offer worth 575p a share from Southwark, steady at 548p.

Reuters was a dull market losing 33p at 638p after the annual meeting at which the group failed to impress. A further slowdown in sales growth was blamed on the strong pound.

IMI accelerated 13p to 442.5p after Merrill Lynch and Charterhouse Tiney both came out with "buy" recommendations following meetings with the company.

The decision of the chairman to offload some of his holding left W Canning 5.5p cheaper at 282.5p. David Probert sold 9,000 shares at 281p reducing his holding to 47,343, or 0.16 per cent.

But there was some positive news for shareholders of Radstone Technology, up 5p at 55.5p, who were last month rocked by news of forecast losses totalling £500,000. The company now says it is looking for a break-even situation.

Cairn Energy lost more ground with the price dropping 17.5p to 316.5p. There are growing fears that the results of the Bangladesh bid round may be delayed until the summer. The result was due last year but appears to have been held up by the award for blocks nine and 10. Cairn, along with Shell, is expected to win blocks five and 10.

GILT EDGED: Shorter-dated issues outperformed the longer end as the market shrugged off the latest inflation numbers which came in bang in line with forecasts. Investors then sat back to await the average earnings and retail sales numbers.

Demand slowed to a trickle with the remaining activity concentrated in the futures pit where the June series of the long gilt traded in narrow limits before closing three ticks off at £109.4 as the total number of contracts completed reached 66,000. The short-dated future slipped 0.01 to finish at £102.90 as 313 contracts were completed. Among conventional issues Treasury 8 per cent 2021 lost 1.4p to £191.1, while at the short end Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was unchanged at £103.3.

NEW YORK: The Dow Jones industrial average rose by a modest 6.23 to 9,148.07 at midday thanks to strong earnings figures from IBM, which overcame the signs of broader market weakness.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):	
Dow Jones	9148.07 (+6.23)
S&P Composite	1123.53 (+0.18)
Tokyo:	
Nikkei Average	15825.67 (+128.37)
Hong Kong:	
Hang Seng	10965.26 (+183.37)
Amsterdam:	
Amex Index	1187.97 (+6.56)
Sydney:	
ASX 200	2666.61 (+1.1)
Frankfurt:	
DAX	5388.94 (+53.08)
Singapore:	
Strait Times	1492.34 (+18.05)
Brussels:	
General	18611.38 (+61.00)
Paris:	
CAC-40	3860.40 (+25.39)
Zurich:	
SIX Gen	1529.10 (+16.39)
London:	
FT 30	3784.6 (+4.9)
FTSE 100	5955.0 (+0.9)
FTSE 250	5434.4 (+16.5)
FTSE 350	2862.9 (+1.9)
FTSE Europe 100	2822.0 (+1.1)
FTSE All-Share	2791.50 (+2.03)
FTSE Financials	2701.65 (+7.25)
FTSE Fixed Interest	142.49 (+0.18)
FTSE Govt Secs	105.27 (+0.10)
Bargains	63135
SEAD Volume	1,873 (+0.002)
German Mark	3.000 (+0.024)
Exchange Index	106.3 (+0.7)
Bank of England official close (Hend)	
EECU	1.2461
ESDR	1.2461
BPI	160.8 Mar (1.5%) Jan 1987=100
RPIX	159.9 Mar (2.6%) Jan 1987=100

RECENT ISSUES

ARM Hldgs	870	5
Aberdeen Crutchie C	999	
Advent 2 VCT	102	
Desire Petroleum	1331	9
Do 85% Cnv Ln 2005	1104	
Do 20% Div Pfr	1024	
Express Delivery	165	1
Guardian IT	451	
Harford Grp	3	
INVESTCO Geared	1054	3
LPL Group	338	3
Microcap Growth Tr	521	
Murray VCT 3 (100)	971	
Outstars	2024	1
Oxford Glycines	2884	2
Quanter VCT 2	90	
Salesforce	70	
Transport Dev B	344	
VI Group	471	

RIGHTS ISSUES

Guinness Pl n/p (20)	11 1/2
Memory Corp n/p (20)	8 1/2
Munich Oil & Gas (55)	6 1/2
Radstone Tech n/p (40)	15 1/2

MAJOR CHANGES

RISES:	
Highgate	3820 (+1320)
Boat (Henry)	3150 (+210)
Boosey Hwks	7750 (+4210)
Highland Dist	3250 (+1610)
Enigma	8840 (+340)
BBA	4430 (+1810)
Black Leds	3020 (+1150)
Abbey Pharma	3750 (+1150)
By Petroleum	8220 (+340)
JIB Sports	8210 (+1610)
GEC	4580 (+1410)
FALLS:	
REA	140p (-25p)
Smithline	681p (-40p)
Cem Energy	318p (-17p)
Raulera	638p (-33p)
Bank Grp	385p (-10p)
Liberty	277p (-10p)
Argos	810p (-20p)

Closing Prices Page 28

TEMPUS
SB still on a high

IT WAS great fun while it lasted, that drug giant merger mania stuff. Especially so because it was laced with all those salacious stories of salaries equal to the GDPs of former states of the Soviet Union. Cool down, however, broke yesterday — certainly over SmithKline Beecham and its moribund ambitions to join forces first with American Home Products, and then Glaxo Wellcome.

The occasion of the bringing down to earth was SB's posting of a rather dull set of first-quarter results. The profits, earnings and dividend went up, but not by all that much. Worse still, the few remaining hopes that a merger might come to pass were doused by Jan 'poor man' Leschly, the £60 million chief executive. It was too much for our more flighty brethren in the investment community. They bored of SB in droves, making the

stock the most heavily traded of the day and pushing the price down by 5 per cent.

But hang on a minute. Let us not get this out of perspective. SB is making profits — and it isn't every drugs company that can boast that. Its profits are also substantial and really are equivalent in size to the GDPs of quite affluent countries. The fact that high on 40 per cent of SB sales are of drugs developed within the last five years, and that it is a company with enough bottom to squit £1 billion at R&D this year, cannot be overlooked. Neither can the fact that a merger, one day with someone (and do not discount Glaxo in this equation, do not discount Leschly says), is still perfectly possible. SB is a company that cannot be ignored. Whether investors can stomach buying shares at a stratospheric 30 times earnings, however, is another matter.

Rank Group

ANDREW TEARE, the embattled chief executive of Rank, must have been feeling comparatively cheerful since February's full-year results. Having taken a pasting over the previous year, the shares had rallied from a low of 277p to break through the 400p barrier.

Yesterday's retreat to 385p following a trading update will have been particularly disappointing given that the first quarter accounts for less than 10 per cent of Rank's total profits. But analysts had been hoping for something rather more positive than "satisfactory trading".

While there were encouraging noises on Odeon cinemas (enjoying *Titanic* attendances) and Universal Studios, the impression given of the Holidays and Hard Rock divisions was decidedly

MEPC

MEPC looks as if it will leave American shores without embarrassment.

The bullish US market is doing it better favours than the climate in Australia where it is stuck with a large Australian property on the books. In addition, the sale of shares in US subsidiaries provides it with a tax-efficient method of liquidating its investment.

That should leave MEPC with more than ample resources to put into place a share buyback and leave enough firepower for the company to fill its boots with properties. There lies the bigger problem. Selling the malls will leave MEPC with gearing of about 25 per cent, a debt ratio more appropriate for a company approaching recession than today's rip-roaring bull market. Unless MEPC knows something the rest of us do not it will be risking a year of lowish growth if it cannot find some

St Ives

ST IVES is the John Major of the Stock Exchange: dull but surprisingly well regarded.

The printing company is widely praised for its sound management, but analysts bemoan the lack of growth in its mature and cyclical markets. Will this ever change?

It certainly seems possible. The acquisition and merger of Warnborough and British Printing Corporation by Investcorp, the Bahrain investment group, looks likely to result in rationalisation.

At best, this means price increases, which will benefit everyone in the printing industry.

FUN FOR SOME



MEPC

more property to gear its balance sheet.

Last time round, MEPC bought and built its way into a bind so it is scarcely surprising if the company is cautious, but there can be few bargains available at this stage in the cycle.

MEPC

merged group is unlikely to affect St Ives too much because, apart from magazines, they operate in separate markets.

Analysts agree that the price investcorp paid for its acquisitions make St Ives, at 517.5p, look slightly undervalued. The company's decision to expand its interests in the rapidly growing junk mail market looks sound, and acquisitions can be expected.

With the level of corporate finance activity relatively quiet, the company's future success depends heavily on the advertising market. However, another factor in the company's favour is its focus on local markets, and therefore its immunity, to a degree, against the strength of sterling. The future for St Ives looks healthy, and shares in the company are likely to be a safe investment, even if they fail to shake off their dull image.

MEPC

Competition from the EDITED BY PAUL DURMAN

COMMODITIES

LIFEE				ICE-LOK (London 10000)				GNI LONDON GRAIN FUTURES			
COCOA				CRUDE OIL \$/BBL (POW)				LIFEE WHEAT LIFEE BARLEY			
								(\$/cwt) (\$/cwt)			
May	1091-1090	Jan	1167-1162	Brent Physical	13.00	0.00	May	76.10	May	75.00	
Jun	1091-1090	Feb	1170-1169	Brent 15 day (Jun)	14.63	+0.18	Jun	76.10	Jun	75.00	
Jul	1091-1090	Mar	1170-1169	Brent 15 day (Jul)	15.00	+0.30	Jul	76.10	Jul	75.00	
Sep	1091-1090	Dec	1170-1169	W Texas Intermediate (Jun)	15.00	+0.20	Sep	76.10	Nov	75.00	
Oct	1112-1111	Aug	1170-1169	W Texas Intermediate (Jul)	15.00	+0.20	Oct	76.10	Dec	75.00	
Nov	1112-1111	May	1170-1169	W Texas Intermediate (Jul)	15.00	+0.20	Nov	76.10	Jan	75.00	
Dec	1112-1111	Jun	1170-1169				Dec	76.10	Feb	75.00	
May	1123-1114	Volume	12966				Volume	790	Volume	131	
ROBUSTA COFFEES \$/L				PRODUCTS \$/MT				LIFEE POTATO (\$/cwt)			
May	1903-1991	Jan	1818 \$1.8	Spot CFR NW Europe (gross delivery)			May	Open	Close		
Jun	1903-1991	Feb	1780 \$1.8				Jun	Open	Close		
Jul	1903-1991	Mar	1780 \$1.8	Premium (Jun)	181	0-2	Jul	Open	Close		
Aug	1903-1991	Apr	1780 \$1.8	Cassini (Sep)	181	+1.1	Aug	Open	Close		
Sep	1903-1991	May	1780 \$1.8	3.5 Fuel Oil	78	+1	Vol	Open	Close		
Oct	1903-1991	Jun	1780 \$1.8	Naphtha	127	+1.1	Volume	131	Volume	131	
WHITE SUGAR #363				ICE POTATOES (KING) LBS				RUSSIAN RYE KISS CWT			
Spot	May	204.3-206.5		CAS OIL				May	42.25-45.75		
Spec	May	204.3-206.5		May	137.30-137.50	Aug	144.00-142.5				
Aug	238.5-240	Aug	238.5-240	Jun	139.30-139.75	Sep	146.30-145.75				
Oct	257.5-270	Oct	248.77-270	Jul	141.00-141.50	Vol	12314				
Dec	268.5-281	Volume	2183								
MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION				BASKET (Kilograms)				LIFEE BEEF KISS LBS (\$/lb)			
Average (market prices at representative markets on April 20)				Jun	14.52-14.64	Sep	14.52-14.64	May	Open	Close	
				Jul	14.51-14.96	Oct	15.69-15.74	Jun	Open	Close	
				Aug	15.36-15.58	Vol	37267	Jul	Open	Close	
								Index	1004 =		
(g/kg) lbs				(\$/cwt)				LONDON METAL EXCHANGE			
May	72.65	114.00	87.22	Copper (LME) \$/lb (gross)	1084-1085.00	June	1084.00-1085.00	20	125.00		
Jun	72.65	114.00	87.22	Copper Gtd \$/lb (gross)	563.50-564.00	July	563.50-564.00	20	125.00		
Jul	72.65	114.00	87.22	Zinc \$/lb (gross)	1084-1085.00	Aug	1084-1085.00	20	125.00		
Aug	72.65	114.00	87.22	Zinc Gtd \$/lb (gross)	563.50-564.00	Sep	563.50-564.00	20	125.00		
Sep	72.65	114.00	87.22	Tin \$/lb (gross)	563.50-564.00	Oct	563.50-564.00	20	125.00		
Oct	72.65	114.00	87.22	Aluminum Ht Gtd \$/lb (gross)	1418.00-1419.00	Nov	1418.00-1419.00	20	125.00		
Nov	72.65	114.00	87.22	Aluminum Vt \$/lb (gross)	563.50-564.00	Dec	563.50-564.00	20	125.00		
Dec	72.65	114.00	87.22								

Older generation could prove just the job

Today sees the first step on the long march back towards respectability for Britain's unemployment figures, corrupted to the point of meaninglessness by the early 1980s recession. The Office for National Statistics (ONS), always an innocent bystander to politicians' manipulation of the figures that they provided, will start highlighting the International Labour Organisation (ILO) measure of unemployment. This includes those looking for work, but not eligible for the jobseeker's allowance, as well as those actually claiming benefit, a dwindling band as forms of compulsion come into force.

This is one instance which gives substance to the Government's rhetoric about transparency: it genuinely gives a more honest picture of the labour market. But today the Employment Policy Institute (EPI) presses for an even more accurate picture, nothing less, it says, than the "full money". One can only fervently hope that the men and women of the ONS limit themselves to unravelling their figures strictly on paper today.

The next focus is the "economically inactive", outside the ILO count and estimated at 7.5 million by Jonathan Wadsworth and Paul Gregg in *Employment Audit*, the EPI's magazine. Both are at the Centre for Economic Performance at the LSE and Mr Gregg serves on the Chancellor's Council of Economic Advisers and is influential in formulating policy.

The "inactive" are people who inhabit the fringes of the labour market. They may have become discouraged from looking for work because they feel that there are no jobs available to them. They may be women who want to work but are constrained by lack of affordable childcare. They may be older men and women who have retired or been retired early and fail to re-enter the world of work through sickness, lack of confidence or discrimination on grounds of age.

The point of trying to find out who these people are is not just a worthy piece of social research. The aim is to identify those groups who, although outside the labour market, are relatively close to its edges — in other words, the people that public policy has the best chance of encouraging back into work, self-reliance and a healthier living than the dismal one afforded by income support or incapacity benefit.

The results of the latest work by the Government's New Deal for the young unemployed and reports suggest that it is already swamped by enthusiasm for the new mix of training, advice and subsidised jobs, but the latest research suggests that there are other groups who have strong claims, some would say stronger claims, for similar help.

The Government has been much criticised for concentrating its firepower on the young who, the argument goes, are more capable of finding work under their own steam. Nevertheless, the Government's belief, strongly shared by Mr Gregg, is that helping young people early will prevent many from drifting into damaging long-term unemployment later in life and is therefore wholly justified. It is still early days for the



NET RESEARCH

Miracle cures prove elusive as British Biotech fights for health

Paul Durman charts the history of a company in crisis

British Biotech was once the standard bearer for the British biopharmaceutical industry. But the emerging crisis at the company threatens to tarnish the reputations of both it and many of those who have been acclaimed for their role in building up the firm.

For the Oxford company's repeated failure to disclose worrying developments with its most important drugs in a timely manner stretches back at least three years. That calls into question not just the role of Keith McCullagh, British Biotech's co-founder and chief executive throughout this time, but also the parts played by the likes of Peter Lewis, the former research and development director, and of James Noble, former finance director. Both Dr Lewis and Mr Noble have made millions from the company, having cashed in their share options shortly after leaving last year.

Dr Lewis and Mr Noble, as well as John Gordon and Ron Irwin, two other executive directors who have quit over the last two years, left the company partly because of their exasperation at the unending difficulties of working with Dr McCullagh. Some shareholders accuse Dr Lewis in particular of having decided to take the money and run rather than try to deal with the fundamental problems within the company. Management of information, and British Biotech's account of the progress of its drug trials, lies at the heart of many of the numerous fierce disagreements among the executive directors and between them and Andrew Millar, dismissed on Monday from his job as director of clinical research. Dr Millar, a cautious researcher with a punctilious attitude towards the facts, has regularly found himself at odds with Dr Lewis and Dr McCullagh, who were more concerned with the commercial aspects of the company's work. On all three of British



Clockwise from top left: John Raisman, Keith McCullagh, James Noble, Peter Lewis, and Andrew Millar

Biotech's most important drugs over the last four years, Dr Millar has consistently worried that the board was being over-optimistic about the prospects of developing a successful medicine. But these worries were not conveyed to the outside world. In marimastat, for cancer, and Zalcet, for pancreatic cancer, British Biotech has developed two drugs of potentially enormous importance. Estimates of marimastat's likely sales have been measured in billions of pounds. Such forecasts helped give a company losing £30 million a year a market valuation that once approached £2 billion. Dr Millar's concerns have often turned out to be well-founded. A series of delays and failed projects have cut the value of British Biotech's shares from 270p last year to 53p yesterday.

Worse still, the company stands accused of covering up its problems, often for many months. Perhaps the most serious failures concern Zalcet, its lead product that was seemingly headed for a 1998 launch. British Biotech was told, in early May 1997, that the European Medicines Evaluation Agency (EMA), the pharma-

ceutics regulator, had five major objections to approving Zalcet for sale. It had doubts about whether British Biotech's earlier UK studies represented proof of efficacy. Five days after this warning was received Dr McCullagh approved two upbeat press releases about Zalcet on the same day. The impression created was that British Biotech was at last on the verge of commercial success. Two months later, problems with the US trials of Zalcet forced the company to expand the study from 450 to 1,500 patients. A look at the data suggested no clear difference between the patients treated with Zalcet and those who had received a placebo.

The company continued to suggest it was hopeful about securing marketing approval for the drug right up until February, when it was forced to admit that the EMA would not give it a marketing licence until it had seen the results of the US trial. British Biotech said yesterday that the decision not to disclose details of the EMA objections was "entirely justified from a regulatory and legal point of view".

British Biotech's press releases on the encouraging results on marimastat, issued in November 1995 and May 1996 while Dr Lewis and Mr Noble were still directors, are the subject of an investigation by the US Securities and Exchange Commission. The allegedly misleading nature of the releases prompted an angry letter in September 1996 from the Division of Drug Marketing, Advertising and Communications, part of the US Food and Drug Administration.

The company did not tell its predominantly UK shareholders about the DDMA letter or the SEC investigation. The only public reference was in a US securities filing, clearly little read by UK investors. Similar concerns about tardy or inadequate disclosure of bad news are also prompted by British Biotech's handling of the side-effect problems of batimastat, a forerunner of marimastat. Work on batimastat was abandoned in 1995 after it was found to cause nausea, vomiting and serious bowel obstructions, sometimes leading to death. The first

reports of these side effects started filtering through from the trial in October 1994 and by January 10, 1995 — at the latest — British Biotech's researchers had grave concerns about the safety of the drug. While the research team waited for further evidence, Dr McCullagh, Sir Brian Richards, co-founder and former chairman, and John Gordon, the executive director who headed the Neurosurgery subsidiary, sold about £1.35 million of shares on January 17. Although these sales have been investigated and cleared by a Stock Exchange inquiry, their timing was unfortunate. Around January 25, British Biotech decided to suspend the batimastat trials. What is difficult to understand is why it took another three and a half weeks for it to tell the stock market about the problems.

British Biotech said yesterday that it was only on the evening of January 23 that it had sufficient evidence to justify a suspension of the trial. It took until February 16 to investigate the problems and to take the board decision that the trial could not be continued. British Biotech claimed that

the side effects stemmed from a change in the method of manufacturing batimastat: it did not want to talk about deaths linked to its usage. The batimastat affair caused dreadful rows, which reached the boardroom. So bad were they that John Raisman, the former Shell UK chairman who had recently taken over as non-executive chairman, had meetings with Mr Noble, Dr Lewis and Mr Gordon. One of those present says the directors told Mr Raisman of the difficulties they faced in working with Dr McCullagh. Mr Raisman is said to have ended the meeting by commenting: "It's either you or him." With Dr McCullagh recognisably the dominant force in the company, Mr Raisman was backing his chief executive. Some close to the company believe it was at that meeting that all three directors resolved eventually to leave.

Before they did so, British Biotech's success with marimastat caused a huge inflation in the share price, which soared from less than 50p to around 350p. British Biotech was briefly on the verge of joining the FTSE 100.

Even many of the company's critics continue to believe in the huge potential for marimastat. But they suggest that the group's enormous spending, of more than £50 million a year, is completely out of proportion with its chances of bringing any significant drugs to market in the near future. They want the company to abandon its grandiose plans to create an international pharmaceutical company with its own sales and marketing operation, and to seek marketing partners.

British Biotech is a key company for this important sector. But if its standards of disclosure are typical of its peers, investors are right to be wary of those promising medical miracles.

BUSINESS LETTERS

Pensions problems should have been solved at the birth of Serps

From Mr J. A. Medley

Sir, With reference to the article by Tim Congdon (Be-ware of forcing us all to save, March 27) and later (April 1) from Sir Robert McCrindle, can anyone explain why the pensions problem could not have been solved once and for all when Serps was introduced?

As originally conceived, the Serps was actuarially balanced; if you were not in a good company pensions plan you were required to pay higher national insurance contributions, and you could then expect benefits broadly equivalent to the value of what you paid in. Although the benefits were slanted towards Greatest Need in a manner inappropriate to compulsory second pensions, they accrued on average on a potentially equitable basis (except that the terms were potentially very rewarding to the Government if Professor Congdon's 6 per cent real rate of return figure is correct).

A national personal pen-

sions scheme would have been possible, compulsory so as to ward off the improvidence feared by Sir Robert and with funding structured so as to meet Professor Congdon's objections. Benefits would have been "portable" in a way that those of Company Plans are not. The only missing ingredient was the unthinkable thought, which these gentlemen will not utter even today, that the Government should have banked the money instead of treating as revenue what should properly have been treated as the investments of individual citizens. The honest and profitable administration of those assets in the industrial and commercial life of the nation should not have been beyond the wit of the establishment to organise. And think of the pensions selling scandals and PFI nonsense that might have been avoided! Yours faithfully, J.A. MEDLEY, Ariscombeleigh, Milhill, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 8NN.

Heathrow Express will thrive when launched

From the Chairman, BAA's Heathrow Express

Sir, Your Tempus column (April 15) was wrong to suggest that the "new Heathrow Express" is pulling out with worryingly empty carriages. How can it, when Heathrow Express doesn't launch until June!

When it does launch, it will be direct, non-stop to Heathrow, taking just 15 minutes — a highly attractive proposition, highly popular and we expect it to be highly populated.

FastTrain is the service I think you are referring to —

it's a temporary service with a 30-minute journey time and coach interchange. Nearly a quarter of a million customers have travelled on it since mid-January, certain services are up to 80 per cent full and, of those travelling, a staggering 50 per cent are repeat customers. That's FastTrain. Now just wait until you see the success Heathrow Express will bring! Yours faithfully, ROD HOARE (Chairman, BAA's Heathrow Express), Cardinal Point, Newall Road, Hounslow, TW6 2QS.

Letters to The Times Business section may be sent by fax to 0171 782 5112 or by e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk. Letters should carry a daytime telephone number.

Liffe chances

IF LIFFE today announces the abandonment of a move to Spitalfields, and it looks a foregone conclusion, then the decision will be welcomed at the Corporation of London. Under an agreement in December 1996 the site reverts to the Corporation, which owns the freehold, saving the futures market the £45 million price tag plus a few bob in development costs already spent. There is an absolute lack of such large properties — Liffe wanted 750,000 sq ft and the building could be enlarged if the local authority, Tower Hamlets, allows.

The Corporation has been preparing for a while another sale at a higher price to a big investment bank looking for space — Commerzbank and Deutsche Morgan Grenfell come to mind, along with various merged Americans such as Chase/Chemical or Bankers Trust, which owns NatWest Markets. I ring Michael Cassidy, who put together the original deal and still sits on the Corporation's policy and resources committee. "Although at the time the deal with Liffe was sensible, events have moved on and it's a happy coincidence that the property market is in the Corporation's favour," he says with a hint of smugness.

GAYNOR REGAN'S first public outing since she married the Foreign Secretary is at the Mansion House tomorrow night. The Lord Mayor's Easter banquet is a jolly night out for our diplomats at which he is due to speak. Given the circumstances of the Cook marriage, I cannot resist passing on who the other speaker will be. The honour goes to the most senior member of London's diplomatic corps, and it would have been the Lebanese Ambassador except that he is



otherwise engaged. So the discussions will be initiated by the High Commissioner for Uganda.

Rank snacks

I NOTE the first authenticated spotting this year of the freezer-baggers. This strange tribe haunt annual meetings for the food and drink afterwards, which they carry off from the buffet and stuff into bags. There are always about three or four of them, and they cooperate. They were out in force at the Rank annual meeting yesterday, and my informant reckons to have seen them in previous years at SmithKline Beecham (a definite sighting), and GrandMet, where the in-

dividual Häagen-Dazs ice creams were a big hit. They get their name — all right, I hereby name them — because at least one uses a huge freezer bag. Another has a big leather number. Look out for them. "They know each other," says my informant, agitated. "They slide off to a quiet corner, where they wrap the stuff in a pile of napkins, and sling it into a bag. It's amazing." This organised gang got away with plate after plate of sausages, quiches, sandwiches and fried fish off Rank at the Russell Hotel yesterday. "They don't look as if they have enough money to be in all these companies," says my source.

I HAVE every sympathy for Mrs A on the sad death of her husband. But I wonder at the wisdom of the case she brought and lost against the undertaker under the Funeral Ombudsman Scheme, published in the annual report. Her family doctor had wrongly completed some of the paperwork. The oversight was discovered the day before the funeral by the crematorium which, quite legally, refused to cremate the poor man. Mrs A decided it was too late to cancel the funeral and tell everyone, so they went ahead anyway, and the cremation took place a few days later. She then brought an action ag-

ainst the undertaker because the funeral had taken place without the deceased.

Silent future?

GEORGE ROBERTSON, the Defence Secretary, was at the Tower of London yesterday for the firing of a salute to mark the Queen's birthday by the guns of the Honourable Artillery Company, manned by men from the Gibraltar Regiment. Both are part of the Territorial Army, and both are threatened with extinction under the huge defence cuts that Robertson is about to make. I am told that he stood well away from the line of fire.

MARTIN WALLER



George Robertson kept out of the line of fire

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"I broke. Dad's linked my pocket money to the pound"

Shares close all square on the day

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

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UNIT TRUST PRICES 29

Source: FT Information
 * Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return).
 † Ex dividend ‡ Middle price. No significant data.
 § Periodic Charge deducted from capital. ¶ Exit Charge.

Joel and Ethan Coen may be fond of a jolly jape, but their movie-making is in earnest. Sheila Johnston meets them

The Coen boys caught napping

Of all the alliances in the history of cinema, that between the Coen brothers and their British editor, Rodger Jaynes, is surely one of the strangest. One may only hazard a wild surmise at why these hip young Americans should have approached a crusty old buffer who had not worked for nearly 30 years to work on their first feature, the lurid *Blood Simple*.

The collaboration went predictably badly. When Jaynes screened his first cut for "the lads", as he liked to call them patronisingly, they responded to the action scenes with silence and to the dramatic ones with — he recalled bitterly — "their alarming asthmatic laughter". A further teaming on *Barton Fink*, a satirical movie about 1940s Hollywood, also ended in tears, with Jaynes inveighing against the brothers' "Borsal sensibility", lousy production values, malformed scenarios and incompetent shooting style before being taken off the picture. That he was nonetheless invited to write the preface for a book by the Coens could have but one explanation: he was a product of their fertile imagination.

This jape is typical of the Coens, involving as it does a thorough intimacy with film history (they invent an imaginary but wholly plausible career for their creation in the remoter backwaters of Rank and Ealing), an amused awareness of their critics and, not least, the pleasure of an

elaborate hoax (it continued for a number of years) noted only by cognoscenti.

Their brand of laconic cool can make the brothers daunting subjects for interview, but also vastly enjoyable ones. They will take a thought and run with it, batting it back and forth, developing it, when at all possible, into a kind of running gag. Their absolute unspoken rapport and unsettling habit of continually cackling together as if at some

‘We’ve given up denying that we’re bastards’

secret inner joke puts one in mind of an intellectual Beavis and Butt-head.

Joel, tall, lanky, sardonic and, at 43, the elder of the two, is officially the director of their seven movies. Ethan, 40, pads around dispensing coffee with a producer's

geniality. Does he ever covet, just for once, a director's credit? "Nah," says Ethan in his flat Midwestern drawl. "Credits just aren't a big issue with us. It would be in bad taste to have our name on screen too many times."

The Coens appear strikingly low on ego. Nothing can perturb their composure. Do they ever disagree on set? Joel: "It's not our style to argue with each other, or with anyone else. We're not confrontational types."

And if someone wants something they don't agree with? "We sulk. But it's rare that it's that cut-and-dried," Ethan: "I don't think anybody who works in movies can afford to be a control freak. But the press makes us authors of the movie because we're here promoting it and the other people aren't."



Kings of movie cool: the laconic Coen brothers, director Joel (left) and producer Ethan, are here to promote their new film, *The Big Lebowski*

The film they are presently selling is called *The Big Lebowski* and concerns a laid-back beach bum by that name (Jeff Bridges), more generally known as The Dude, who finds himself mistaken for another Lebowski, a shady businessman.

However, the plot, highly complex and inconsequential, is less important than the weird assortment of individuals surrounding The Dude: a Vietnam veteran with a carpe-bag full of conspiracy theories (John Goodman), a dippy feminist performance artist

(Julianne Moore), a posturing Hispanic bowling star (John Turturro) and a merry band of German nihilists.

The Coens' critics accuse them of writing brilliant Faberge-egg scripts, with nothing of substance below the enamelled surface. And yet no-

one can gainsay their ear for dialogue, eye for a remarkable camera angle and nose for an immaculately executed jeu d'esprit.

"Our scripts kinda grow organically and we don't really prune much away," Ethan says. He pauses a beat. "May-

be we should." While Los Angeles teems with gurus promising courses on and recipes for the perfect script, the Coens profess to work in a systematically shambolic manner. Ethan says: "We talked a couple of times about holding our own seminar. We

thought that people might pay money to hear us. The idea broke down at the point where we had to figure out what we were going to say. We nap a lot. That's our method."

Joel: "Mostly we just sit down, start at the beginning and see where it goes. Which is why we frequently stop in the middle. We've got lots of scripts which are only half done, because they just don't go anywhere. It's rare that we write a script, get the financing and go out and do it."

This has been more difficult in part because, despite a formidable cult following, their work has never broken through to mainstream box-office success. "We're very

‘It's not our style to argue with each other’

marginal," says Joel. "But people are happy to let us play in our corner because we don't spend a lot of money. *Fargo* was a \$6 million movie, so it didn't need to do \$100 million at the box office."

Among the unfilmed screenplays stacked in their drawer are a story "about a barber in northern California in the late 1940s. He wants to run a dry cleaning business — just in case you're afraid it doesn't sound commercial enough. It's about *Modern Man*." Then there is an adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* set during the American Depression. "It's about *Modern Man* too." And a third features a Philby-like figure, an idealistic British spy who ends up in Cold War-era Moscow facing the reality of what he had believed in. "It's so miserable," the brothers explain happily, "that it would have to be a comedy."

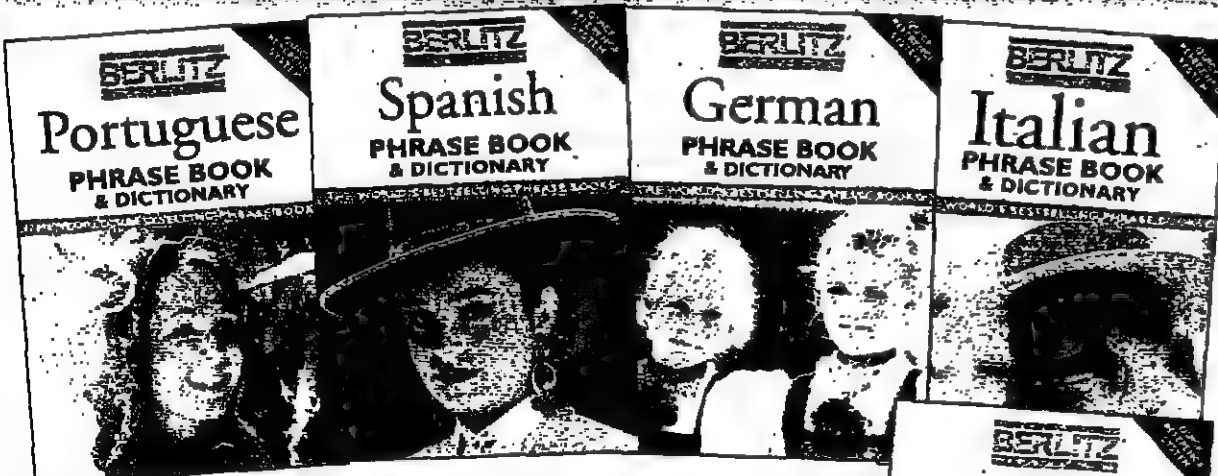
The severest criticism levelled against the Coens is that their films are misanthropic cynicism, that the brothers are — how may one put this with tact? "Heartless bastards?" offers Joel. "Yeah, sure, we've read that." Ethan: "Actually we've given up denying it. One doesn't want to sound defensive." Joel: "We've decided to plead guilty." Ethan: "Yeah, it's simpler. Makes everyone happy." And the lads dissolve into asthmatic laughter.

● *The Big Lebowski* opens on Friday

AN EXCLUSIVE READER OFFER

THE TIMES

Free Berlitz phrase book worth £3.50



To celebrate the 120th anniversary of Berlitz, *The Times* is offering readers the chance to get a FREE Berlitz phrase book. Readers can choose either French, German, Spanish, Italian or Portuguese. The phrase books contain:

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- how to call a doctor and deal with the post office and telephone

The normal price of these guides is £3.50 but you just pay the cost of postage, 70p. Simply collect four of the seven differently numbered tokens published in *The Times* this week and attach them to an order form. A form appeared yesterday, another will be printed on Thursday.

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CHANGING TIMES

Got the waterworld on a string

The Riverside Studios have been flooded; a waste-high pool of water covers most of the floor of Studio Two, decorated with a pretty pagoda and two aisles of floating flowers and ceremonial flags. This water, as it turns out, is teeming with life: frisky fish, turtles, ducks and even the occasional dragon. The hyperactive fauna are on a visit from Vietnam, accompanied by a vast aquatic set, amphibious pyrotechnics, five musicians and seven very dumpy puppeteers.

More than a thousand years ago the art of Vietnamese water puppetry was developed by the peasants of the Red River delta for performances in paddyfields. The puppets used today are still deceptively simple: lacquered wood mannequins set on long rods operated by invisible, string-tweaking puppeteers. Together they describe the myths and

THEATRE
The Soul of the Rice Fields
Riverside, W6

legends of Vietnam. Far from being weighed under by the gravity of heritage, the puppets are comic and mischievous. Little swimming boys splash about in the deep water, farmers chase after feeding fowls, lambs bounce about with a magical ball.

The precision with which they are operated is extraordinary: fishermen puppets manage to catch fish puppets with their rods and warrior puppets decapitate each other with deadly sword swings. All the more remarkable given that the puppeteers, hidden behind a screen, cannot see the puppets that they are operating.

Dutch double

The Gate's quixotic expedition to bring the newest and best of world drama to London ends in Holland after underwhelming stops in Germany, Norway, Japan and Croatia. The set, perfectly white for this double Dutch bill of plays by contemporary female writers, is as welcoming as a padded cell with furniture.

The first play, by Judith Herzberg, is a bloodless affair starring a plump woman and her telephone. The nameless she (Susan Gott) is waiting for a call from a married man she is having an affair with concerning their future. Not only is she plagued by well-meaning friends, wrong numbers and nuisance callers, she turns out to be a compulsive dialler herself.

The next point of Herzberg's play is how disingenuously we reinvent ourselves for every interlocutor: the saint for the jilted woman whose husband has run off; the martyr for the woman who accuses her of an indecent act with another man; the psychiatrist for the parents of a boy who pees in girls' satchels at school.

A telephone, however, is a hopelessly lazy dramatic device that needs a miraculous performance to make it interesting. Gott does extraordi-

The Caracal Dossier: Ronald Alderman
Gate, W11

narily well to hold all these conversations in her head but frankly, she could have phoned in the performance.

Suzanne van Lohuizen's short, sharp companion piece deconstructs the relationship between a stiff-lipped nurse and her first AIDS victim. The dead Ronald, a ghost in a dressing gown, swans around Judith's flat unpicking her guilty conscience that she somehow failed him.

The simple efficiency of the writing infects the whole play. Judith not only delivers her lines to the ghost but comments on how she is feeling with clinical third-person precision. Ronald sits Judith's emotions and what he thought of her with a pitiless, almost smug honesty. Trevor Sellers and Katherine Grace pitch their performances perfectly to steal the understated compassion and give an otherwise threadbare evening some much-needed weight.

JAMES CHRISTOPHER

and are doing so from a distance of up to six feet through the water.

It is with the animals that their artistry comes into its own. Despite the limited movement that most of the puppets afford, the puppeteers manage to capture precisely the nuances of animal behaviour. The lambs bounce about like boisterous dogs playing in the water, wiggling their heads and bottoms and twirling in the air as they jump. Fish swish around each other, skim the surface and leap up when caught they flail with

convincingly asphyxiated stiffness. Most beautiful of all are the startled-looking dragons who perform an elegant dance and breathe both fire and water.

Between the fighting beasts and dancing fairies, sulphurous fireworks glide under the surface of the water then bob up, exploding in billows of cottony smoke. This is a magical world and the most extraordinary spectacle, rich with ancient mystery and exceptional skill.

HETTIE JUDAH

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament
NICOLA MCCARTNEY

Age: 25.
Profession: Playwright and theatre director.

Sounds like an insane choice of career: McCartney is a one-woman writing powerhouse. At an age when most university graduates are still flipping burgers, McCartney has already staged four of her full-length plays: *Laundry*, *Easy*, *Entertaining Angels* and *The Hanging Tree*, as well as numerous shorts.

Time to rest on her laurels then? Don't believe it; two more plays are on the way for this year: *Heritage* for the Traverse in Edinburgh and *Transatlantic* for the LookOut Theatre Company. In her spare time there are a couple of one-off drama commissions for TV.

So why isn't her name more familiar? Despite a certain ubiquity north of the border, McCartney is not convinced that the streets of London are paved with gold — yet.

Yet! Well, a National Theatre commission has been hanging over her for a couple of years.

Background: Born in Northern Ireland, she moved to Glasgow for university and still lives there.

So she's some kind of cross between Mark Ravenhill and Irvine Welsh, right? Wrong. McCartney has bigger concerns than titillation and making a fast buck off the zeitgeist. Themes tackled so far include family, religion, the death of the left, vigilante gangs, emigration and acquaintance rape.

Sounds like a really fun night out: Actually her work is very funny. Think Mike Leigh with a spot of karaoke and line dancing thrown in. She has a demon ear for dialogue, helped along by input from the redoubtable LookOut, with whom she workshops many of her plays, developing the characters and dialogue through improvisations.

Perfect future? Wants to write an important play that will resonate long after she has shuffled off this mortal coil.



HETTIE JUDAH

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For one day only, all the world's a library

Shakespeare's birthday tomorrow is also World Book Day. Its programme is vast and ambitious, Nicolette Jones reports

In case you have missed the build-up, April 23 is World Book Day. For a fortnight, the BBC has been screening short films in which celebrities enthuse about their favourite books (Tony Blair chose *Ivanhoe*, for instance, Griff Rhys Jones, *Huckleberry Finn*, and the chef Ainsley Harriott picked Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*). And around the country preparations have been under way to celebrate a huge reading fest.

You might not think that reading, as a solitary contemplative activity, lends itself to sociable high jinks. But you would be wrong. If you enter a library or bookshop tomorrow (as you should), be prepared for any of the following: fancy dress, storytellers, magicians, poetry readings, exhibitions, quizzes, reader surveys, sonnet-writing competitions, hunt-the-book contests, balloons, and the chance to write your own review or recommend your own favourite. Some shops are offering discounts on any book sold on the day (10 per cent at the Silver Moon Bookshop in London's Charing Cross Road, for one); others are giving books away (signed copies every half-hour at Dillons in Oxford).

More than 50,000 schools were sent promotional mailings, and on the day 12 million under-18s will receive a £1 voucher to spend in a bookshop. Children in thousands of schools will be dressing up as literary characters, making books, reviewing them, buying them and meeting authors and illustrators. Schools have planned special assemblies, themed lessons, talks and readings, book fairs, swap shops, fund-raising readathons, workshops on pop-up books or jacket design, puppet shows, performances of book-related dance, rap and theatre, and even — for this is surely the point — silent reads.

Some responses have been singularly inventive and enterprising. Pupils at Pendeford High School in Wolverhampton will build a wall of their favourite books. The kitchen staff at Forge Lane Infant School in Hamworth in Middlesex will dress up as queens of hearts to serve heart-shaped jam tarts to children. Shooting Girls' School in Southampton will be discussing books with schools in Jamaica and Japan via the Internet. City Secondary

School in Sheffield has a photographic competition — for pictures of people reading. Frank Wise Special School in Banbury will make a library in a day. Several establishments are producing their own "book of books", with choices by pupils and parents. And schools for the blind and the dyslexic are participating with enthusiasm.

In just a few cases the celebration seems to have exceeded its brief. Cradoc Primary School in Powys is taking the opportunity to raise money for new garden benches (to sit and read on, perhaps). Pupils at Labwath Primary in Hull will be designing a tie (there is a connection: it's to be presented to the chap who refurbishes the library). And, for reasons of its own, the festivities at Langham Primary School in Rutland include skipping for health and parachuting. No doubt they have found ways of reading at the same time.

The larks will spill out onto the streets. Some bookshops are having street parties. In Birmingham, a "Words on Wheels" library bus will circulate for nine days; 6,000 children will hop on to browse. Children from eight local schools will be writing stories in the Metro Centre shopping mall in Gateshead, in a two-day event backed by Waterstones. And in Oldbury, pupils from Bristol Hall High School will be visiting the City Hospital on Friday to read to other children.

It is a big day for book parties and launches. Arabella Weir will be presenting prizes in a customer competition at Books Etc in Piccadilly. Beryl Bainbridge's new novel, *Master George*, about the Crimean War, is published. And Walker Books launches an admirable new reading scheme for nursery children called *Reading Together*, designed for parents to get the most out of reading with their children. A World Book Day celebration at

the Globe Theatre in London from 12.30 will involve children and celebrities in a sponsored read-in. It will be hosted by the *Blue Peter* presenter Karyn Hill, and include a performance by the BBC's poet-in-residence, John Agard, of a poem specially written for the day. The BBC has been keen to present itself as a better ally of reading than its rival. Tomorrow there will be *The Book Quiz* on BBC2 and a feature, *The Written Word*, a "tour of the literary globe", compiling images of other countries and readings from their most famous writers, such as Chinua Achebe's *Nigeria*, Toni Morrison's *New York*, Peter Carey's *Australia* and Arundhati Roy's *India*.

Which raises the issue of where the World comes into Book Day. Last year (the first time we joined in) 38 other countries celebrated too. This year some are connected to our festivities on the Internet. The BBC has a World Book Day Website (www.bbc.co.uk/education/worldbookday) which gives a "whistle-stop tour through the history of the written word".

Hammicks bookshops throughout the UK are teaming up with local Oxfam shops so that customers can bring unwanted books for resale in aid of worldwide literacy schemes.

Many activities cited above are organised to help Book Aid International, which supplies books to other countries in need. Unwanted books can also be donated to Book Aid — but do consider their usefulness. The least helpful contributions in the past have been the AA Road Map of Bristol, and an understandably unwanted *Tarback on Showbiz*. It is not greatly in demand in Botswana.

Last year the idea of World Book Day was introduced to the British book trade with three months' warning. It was inspired by a day fêted in Barcelona since 1926: on St

George's Day (Barcelona's patron saint too) friends exchange books and roses.

The Day was orchestrated here by the Booksellers Association and the Publishers Association, and the trade did its best. The Hammicks chain notably sent 150,000 £1 vouchers to local schools, in a venture that pioneered the current one. Now the 12 million vouchers have been distributed with sponsorship from Securicor and the support of the Department for Education and Employment.

There was a happy coincidence about Barcelona's fêted day, April 23: it is the day on which Shakespeare's birthday is traditionally celebrated (since his baptism is recorded as April 26), which is why many events have a Shakespearean theme, and why the Globe is a focus. It is also, by an extraordinary coincidence, the known date of Shakespeare's death — and, in the same year (1616), the day on which Cervantes was buried (he died on April 22). It is also Holocaust Remembrance Day, which might not seem much cause for celebration. On the other hand, Hitler burnt books too. A festival of reading seems appropriately defiant.

No one, surely, could object to World Book Day. In fact, it has not been without controversy. The voucher scheme has depended on the goodwill of booksellers to honour it. To offset losses, the bookshops have been provided free with a £1 book, the specially commissioned *Children's Book of Books*, so that children who have no more than their voucher to spend may go away with a selection of extracts from favourites chosen by celebrities. (This time Tony Blair chose Tolkein.) But 12 million vouchers were printed. One million copies of the book were printed. Some independent bookshops couldn't get them, because they were snapped up by big chains, and they have opted out in protest.

It is possible, too, that there may be members of the public who do not wish to participate in all the hullabaloo. Some may, after all, prefer to curl up with a good book.

• A World Book Day supplement will appear with *The Times* tomorrow



On World Book Day a shared love of reading could well lead to the most unlikely friendships

VISUAL ART: John Russell Taylor on the first major show by the up-and-coming Chris Ofili

Dotting the eyes

Chris Ofili tends to paint large, while the dealers' galleries where he has had his one-man shows, and indeed his own King's Cross studio, are relatively tiny. Apparently the major museum show he is now receiving at Southampton City Art Gallery (with the collaboration of the Serpentine) is the first time he has seen more than three of his pictures gathered together, which must be a strange and possibly revelatory experience for any painter. It is pretty revealing for the public, too, demonstrating the range and variety of his work, as well as the basic unity of vision underlying it.

Ofili was born in Manchester, of Nigerian parents. Inevitably his work has attracted all sorts of ethnic labels, although Ofili, quite correctly, minimises the importance of his African origin: yes, being black in a predominantly white community has of course had its effect, but is just one of many influences on his complex and sophisticated art.

A number of his brilliantly coloured paintings admittedly concern themselves with stereotypes, but unlike most African-American artists he does not seem particularly to resent them. Rather, he takes plea-

sure in... satirising them is probably not too strong a word. There are several paintings in the show which depict the archetypal African woman in all her mammilliferous majesty. But we are left in no doubt that this is a slightly absurd fantasy; largely, perhaps, a white male fantasy, but something that Ofili too enjoys.

Nor is it only white men who have fantasies. Women too have them: in one painting a slim and attractive African woman is seen dreaming. She is boldly painted in Ofili's distinctive dot technique, and is at first glance all you can see. But then, on closer inspection, another figure appears, a naked and muscular African man, painted in faint yellowish outline. The yellow is in fact luminous, so that in the dark this underlying figure emerges strongly while the superimposed woman disappears.

Another, smaller picture, punningly entitled *Afrofilia*, embodies another fantasy, and perhaps fear: the supposed superior potency of the black man is symbolised by a collection of outsize phalluses outlined in black dots on a white ground. Or they seem to be dots. But when you look really closely, you see that

each dot is actually a tiny head sporting huge Afro hair.

Among other things, this demonstrates Ofili's mastery of scale and proportion: he can come down to extreme miniaturisation (a handful of the pictures shown are themselves minute) without ever losing his grasp of the overall composition.

An important attribute, this, for a painter preoccupied with dots. Ofili's dots of colour are closer to the dots used in much Australian aboriginal painting than to those of Seurat, but they have the same basic requirement: that they should coalesce at a distance. Some of the paintings have mottled surfaces suggestive of South-East Asian batik while others are obsessively overlaid with Indian paisley patterns. Chinese-looking gods and devils appear, as in *Captain Shit* and *the Legend of the Black Stars*. Even most of the elephant dung comes from Indian rather than African elephants.

Elephant dung? Well, you may remember that Ofili's very discreet use of this dark brown substance was commented on in features about the Royal Academy's *Sensation!* show last year. It does sound sensational, but in fact no one would know what it



Captain Shit and the Legend of the Black Stars, a work from Chris Ofili's notorious elephant dung period

was if they had not been told, and it is all disinfected and lacquered so that it is offensive to no physical sense. It is hard to see why this aspect should be commented on, while no

one remarks that Ofili also paints flowers with unconscious delight.

• Southampton City Art Gallery, Civic Centre, Southampton (01703 632601), until May 31

Match of the day

CONCERT
BCMG/Kok
Purcell Room

elegiac in mood, with muted trumpets and mournful saxophones complementing the timbre of the solo cello, here the excellent Ulrich Heinen. An eruption of anger is transmuted into a requiem-like finale. Kok and the players picked up the powerful currents of the jazz idiom, giving an impulsive swing to the disruptive cross-rhythms. There was some finely nuanced handling of texture, too, the melancholy solo cello in-

terweaving with the subtly modulated voices of the other strings.

The pair of Steve Martland pieces with which the concert opened, *Re-Mix* and *Principia*, used jazz/rock idioms and instrumentation to exciting effect. The former is based on a 17th-century model and Colin Matthews's *Dowlandia* — receiving its world premiere — also looked back to that era. Matthews's work is a collection of dances he has arranged, in exotic and exuberant style, to celebrate the birthdays of various friends and colleagues. The suite is unpretentious in intention and executed with flair and imagination.

Only David Lang's *My Evil Twin* disappointed. Its idea is to explore the equilibrium of the desires to be kind and cruel, but its constant edgy chugging sounded neither benign nor murderous.

BARRY MILLINGTON

Verdi, wit and whimsy

There has been something of a festival atmosphere of late just off St Stephen's Green at Dublin's Gaity Theatre. Dieter Kaegi, Opera Ireland's new artistic director from Basle, is now into his second season and, with a keen eye for both national and international talent at a price the company can afford, both morale and standards are riding ever higher.

Kaegi has a sharp eye and ear for the stage himself, as his recent controversial staging of *Tristan* at Monte Carlo showed. He directs this season's new *Faustfall*, and a refreshingly witty evening he makes of it. Stefanie Pasterkamp's single set places the action, whimsically, in the bar and backroom of the Gaity Theatre itself, in rather earlier, rather scruffier times. Seated on a bar-stool in the corner is the silent figure of Verdi himself, reincarnated in the lookalike presence of actor Pádraig O'Faoláin.

This may sound just too whimsical, but it works as part of an energetically thought-through celebration of Verdi: an illusion and delusion in which Faustfall is a middle-aged womaniser who dresses up only to seduce, and who saves his traditional doublet-and-hose for his final role. And, as he is released from this last costume-change, a row of theatre seats is pushed forward to the footlights, and the entire cast jostles for a place in the final fugue as Verdi is applauded by us and by them.

Kaegi's idiosyncratic approach yields many irresistible cameos. Verdi may be spotted whispering affectionately at the bar to those on whom he lavishes his fondest melody; the lovers Nanetta (Daniella Lojarto, in melting voice) and Fenton (Glen-Luc Viala as the archetypal Latin lover). Then, as Ford (Richard Byrne) ponders on dream and reality, his fellow tweedy drinkers gently slide up, quaffing and quipping at his gullibility.

Byrne's expansive baritone tends to show up the somewhat less resonant voice of his American colleague Roy Stevens. But the women are consistently well cast and, although Antonello Allemandi, conducting the RTE Concert Orchestra, has his work cut out in the finer points of ensemble. Anne Margarethe Dahl as Alice Ford, Hanna Schaefer as Mistress Quickly and Kari Hamoy as

OPERA
Faustfall/Tales of Hoffmann
Dublin

Meg Page contribute to a vivid palette of voices and character. A similar flair for colourful casting is at work, too, in Opera Ireland's other new production, *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Here the Belgian director Joël Lauwers works with an even greater economy of means, using a single louvered screen as shifting backdrop for all Hoffmann's tableaux. Paris parties behind it; Munich's starry sky peeps through it; and, in a glowing Venetian red, made all the more effective for designer Louis Desiré's spare use of colour, La Serenissima's skyline rocks, gondola-like, in the distance.

These *Tales* are long and busily peopled (three different sopranos and the company's new young professional chorus). But their enchantment works in tiny details which kick-start our own imagination: just a catalogue for Coppélius's many inventions: a single, spinning LP to work Dr Miracle's spell on poor Antonia; one picture frame in which to lose both her fame and Hoffmann's own reflection. Claude Schnitzler, conducting, and Jean Pierre Furian as Hoffmann conspire to bring true Gallic élan, if precious little subtlety, to all they do. The musical magic is focused in the voices of Marie-Anne Rorholm's Nicklausse, Ana Camelia Stefanescu's Olympia, Mary Ann McCormick's Gubena — and most radiant of all — Regina Nathan's Antonia.

HILARY FINCH

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Sunday Times
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Times
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May 9 | 14 | 19 | 21
23 | 27 at 7.30pm
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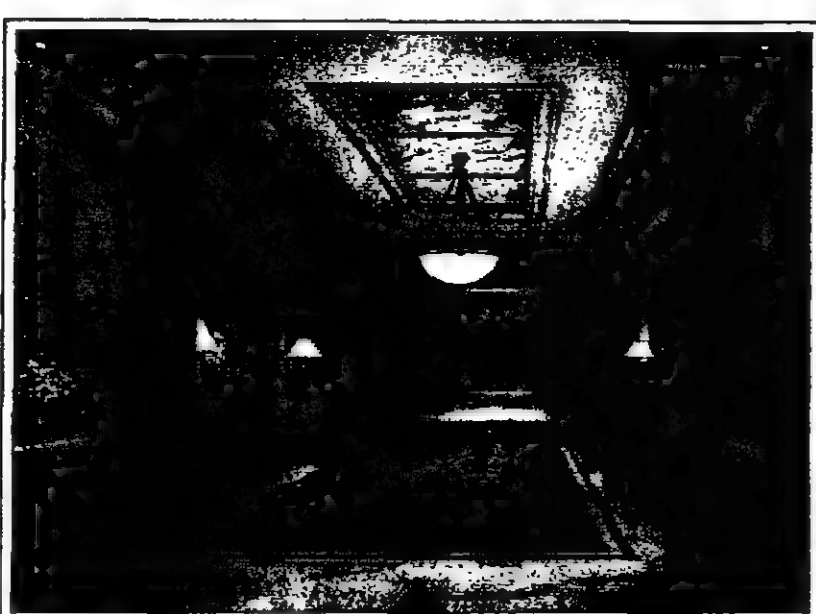
The Fairy Queen
Purcell



PROPERTY

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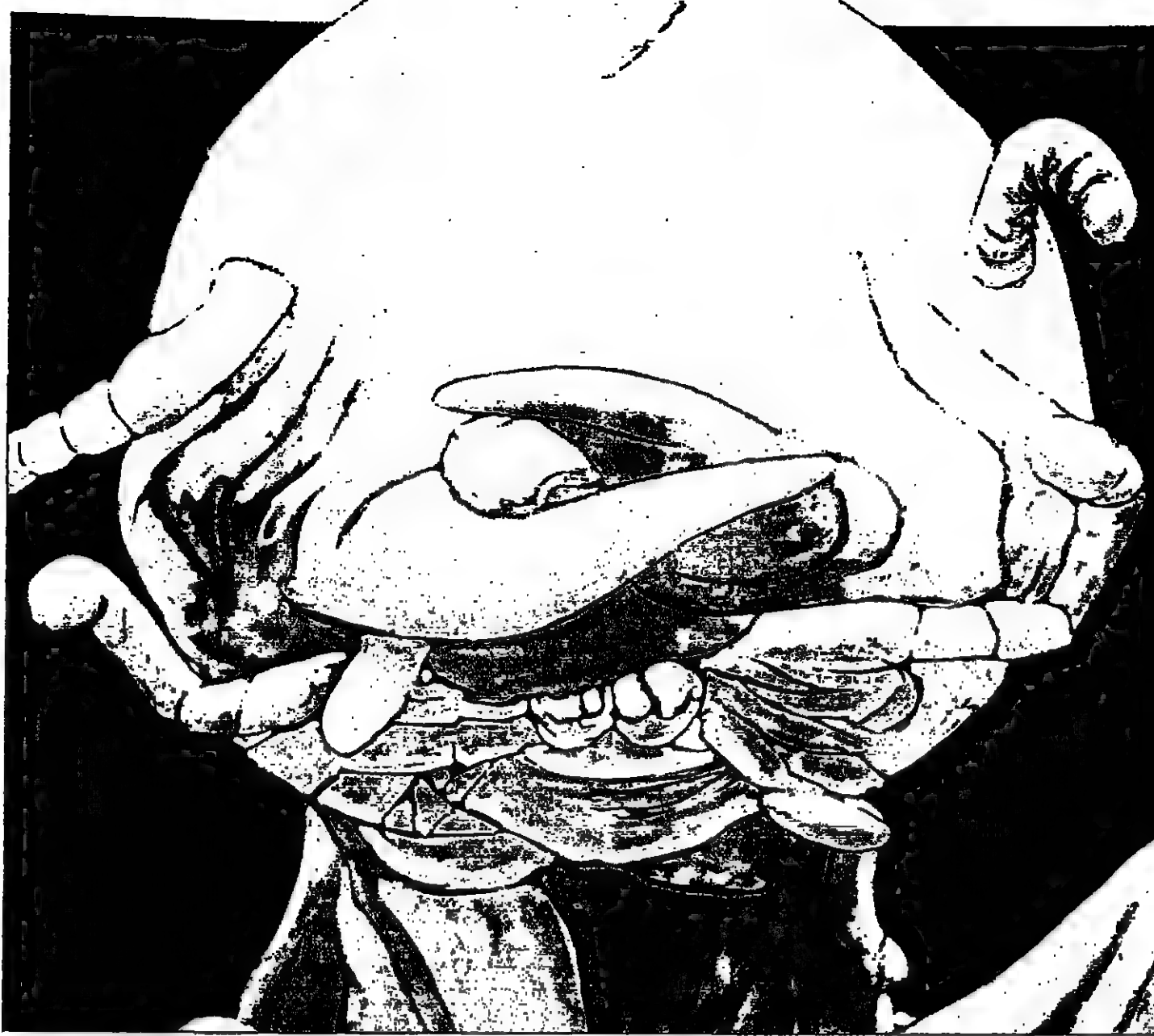
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The monster

from inner space

Wood-boring bugs from France are invading Britain, reports Adam Barnard



The head and thorax of a soldier termite: a large swarm can devour a house in days Photograph: Scharf/Science Photo Library

Insect specialists say global warming is bringing a new wave of bugs across the Channel and that homeowners will find themselves defenceless. Leading insurance companies will not offer policies for damage by infestation. The costs of repairing your home could go through what's left of the roof.

The British Wood Preserving and Damp-proofing Association (BWPD) says that three species of wood-boring insects — the house longhorn beetle, the death-watch beetle and the termite — are making unprecedented appearances in Britain.

The worst are termites, which look like overgrown ants in a coat of slime. Up to 50,000 of these insects, each up to 4in long, can invade at once. A buzzing swarm of twitching wings and antennae could devour your house in days.

Oria Thornycroft, a widow, saw her £300,000 seaside holiday home, The Brackens, in Staunton, near Barnstaple in north Devon, infested four years ago after a previous owner of the house had brought back a termite-ridden plant from a holiday in the south of France.

The colony was thought to have been exterminated, but it has recently re-established itself, causing even more damage. Some experts fear that it may have spread to other homes in the area, and if so, the insects' resilience could mean the start of an epidemic.

Bruce Eggleton, the managing director of McCoy Hill, a Devon-based timber preservation specialist, which tackled the original infestation, says: "What people need to remember about termites is that they have wings and can travel between timbers. We live in a changing climate and insects are very adaptable."

"Some people are saying the termites in Devon will spread, but I think they probably already have."

Mr Eggleton blames their revival on a lack of Government support. The owner had already paid £6,000 for treatment. There was no financial help from the Government so she was forced to go for the cheaper option. "This may have led to wide-scale infestation."

Dr Tony Bravery, the director of the centre for timber technology

and construction at the Building Research Establishment, which advises the Environment Department, says: "It is worrying. When they were first detected we thought they were on the limits of what they could cope with in climatic terms."

The termites' survival could be attributed to warmer winters.

"Living things are distributed by environmental conditions. If it is getting warmer, as some experts suggest, then it is logical that the limits of northern distribution will start to occur further north."

Previously, termites are known to have moved from southern France to Paris. Now they have crossed the Channel.

The damage here will be worse, Mr Eggleton says. "Most people do not realise how many houses are

built with timber. In southern Europe and America termites are an old problem and people know how to deal with it. They build houses with concrete foundations to stop termites getting in. We have never taken measures like that."

Nests of millions of insects can develop from a single pair, Mr Eggleton adds.

There are other threats. In a report with the insurer the Guarantee Protection Trust, the BWPD says: "The house longhorn beetle, which is capable of boring a hole the size of a pencil through most rafters, was previously restricted to the micro-climate of Camberley in Surrey. It has now been found in wood taken from a Scottish building."

"Scotland's increasing warmth has also proved attractive to the death-watch beetle. It used to be too cold for insects to breed there."

"Britain's climatic change has already increased property subside- nce. Now new wood-boring insects are finding temperatures adequate for their breeding cycles and are starting to appear in previously 'clear' areas."

Mrs Thornycroft faces a repair bill of more than £50,000, which a friend says she is unlikely to be able to afford. Mrs Thornycroft says: "I'm becoming increasingly distraught about the whole affair."

And because means testing will incorporate the value of her house, she is unlikely to receive a local authority grant, Mr Eggleton says. Worse still, many of the biggest

insurance companies say that they will not offer cover for damage by infestation.

A spokesman for Commercial Union says: "We can extend household policies to cover accidental damage but this specifically excludes damage caused by moths or vermin."

Guardian Direct's policies exclude "damage caused by infestations by insects or vermin" although a spokesman says the company may alter its policies in the future. However, if the example of the mason wasp, which eats away at the stonework of old houses, is anything to go by, the homeowner is in for a rough ride. It was classed as vermin and excluded from every major policy after it became a widespread problem three years ago.

Malcolm Smith reports on a discovery that could help in the fight against the voracious bug that threatens so much of England's architectural heritage

Of the panoply of timber pests that can reduce sturdy roof timbers to sawdust, death-watch beetle is the hardest to eradicate. So ineffective are most treatments, an infestation of this brown, quarter inch, bug has usually meant a replacement of old timber with new, until now.

Research suggests that we could finally beat the bugs. For the past three years, Steve Belmain, an entomologist employed by Kew Gardens and Birkbeck College, London, has been scrambling around dusty lofts studying the biology and behaviour of these tiny destroyers of history.

Dr Monique Simmonds, who led the project, says: "We have discovered that the adult beetles can fly and are attracted to light. No one knew that before. They fly once the air temperature is above 17C. In April and May, we've tested sticky tapes coloured white or yellow, which the insects can see in dark lofts. They attract females more than males. We've also had success using traps with light bulbs and UV detectors."

Another discovery is that the infestations are not always associated with donkloporia fungus on the wood, as was previously assumed. Dr Simmonds adds: "The beetles grow faster in fungus-infected wood, probably because the larvae can bore into it more easily and because some of the chemicals produced when old oak decomposes attract the adults." So the researchers are testing light traps laced with these chemicals to make them more attractive to beetles.

Male death-watch beetles bang their heads on timber to attract a mate — making a noise like a pneumatic drill. The eerie sound was once considered a portent of family death.

Concentrating their boring on oak — the timber used in most of our historic buildings — the list of

disastrous death-watch infestations include Winchester and Salisbury cathedrals, Kew Palace and many churches and manor houses across southern Britain.

Death-watch is difficult to treat from the surface of infected timber. Tony Stephens, of Rentokil Initial, says: "The larvae burrow deep inside for up to ten years, eating all the time. Each female lays about 50 eggs, which develop into larvae. We can put insecticide paste on the outside or use a water-based spray of boric acid. But these only

penetrate, say, half an inch in. Wood usually has to be cut out and replaced which is very costly."

The Kew research is being funded by the European Union in recognition of the scale of death-watch beetle problems across the Low Countries and in southern Britain.

John Fiddler, head of architectural conservation at English Heritage, says: "In older buildings this is the pest that costs the most money to treat."

Replacing infected wood in the roof of the south transept of Winchester Cathedral cost £60,000 in scaffolding and £30,000 in carpentry costs. Mr Fiddler says: "Westminster Hall's hammerbeam roof, the most important in Britain, has been treated since the turn of the century using pesticide smoke bombs, but it doesn't penetrate and the beetles even hide away in crevices when the bombs go off. They aren't stupid."

"What excites me about the Kew research is that attracting the adults into traps might be more effective than using dangerous pesticides and solvents which can leach out of the wood, damaging delicate plasterwork or staining decorative finishes."

Dr Simmonds, meanwhile, is looking for more sponsorship to perfect the traps. The head-banging days of the death-watch beetle are numbered.



The beetle goes to work



The Brackens, the north Devon bungalow that became infested after a plant was brought back from a French holiday

Urban escapees are turning to holiday lets, says Amanda Loose

Flight brigade cries 'South Westward Ho!'

Bob Blacklock was fed up with commuting. Leaving home at 6.15am for a 15-hour trip from Guildford to Knightsbridge to run a residential property company each day was exhausting. So Mr Blacklock and his wife, Marjorie, swapped Surrey for Devon. They now let out holiday cottages at Bealy Court, near Chulmleigh.

The Blacklocks are not alone. About 4,900 people flee urban living each week, according to *Urban Exodus*, a study by the University of Newcastle upon Tyne for the Council for the Protection of Rural England, published earlier this year. Greater London is losing almost twice as many townies as all the other big cities combined.

"Leaving home so early and returning at 8pm was not a particularly attractive regime," Mr Blacklock says. "London was becoming more stressful, and commuting tiring and a waste of time. I got to a point where I was in my fifties and had to think whether I wanted to do this for another ten or 15 years."

"Both our children were growing up and my wife wanted to turn her hand to something interesting. The general idea was that we needed to make big changes in our lives. I had some experience with property, and we thought that having a home which would also bring in an income would be a good way of dealing with our lives."

After deciding to make the change in 1995, the couple sold their home and moved into rented accommodation while they looked for a house in Devon. "We thought being cash buyers would be an advantage. We got to know the area and thought it was the centre of the sort of self-

catering holidays we would offer, which seemed to be on the increase.

"We found Bealy Court, a seven-bedroom manor house with nine cottages converted from stone barns. We used the proceeds from the sale of our home and took out a mortgage to make up the difference."

"We felt the place needed a facelift. We have a rolling repairs programme on the cottages, and so far have spent £7,000 on furnishings, and £5,000 on redecoration, lighting and a new kitchen floor in one unit."

"It has been a steep learning curve, but we have been pleasantly surprised. We have exceeded the income made by the previous owners in our first year. Units are

priced from about £190 a week, depending on the season, with weekend breaks at about £100.

"Marjorie and I work as a partnership, which is enjoyable, and have the same focus. Life is more relaxed. I'm still busy, but it's a different sort of busy. It's the best thing that ever happened to us."

The bucket and spades have more choice than ever before in the West Country, as buyers fed up with the rat race flock to the area in search of holiday cottages and cottage complexes to let out, according to Jackson-Stops & Staff. Many would-be buyers are empty nesters wishing to still earn an income, or planning ahead for their retirement home, with Devon the most popular choice. So prices of cottages there are rising, and agents report lists of applicants stretching into the hundreds for such properties.

Michael Clark, at Jackson-Stops & Staff in Exeter, says prices of cottages have risen by 10 to 15 per cent over the past year, increases fuelled by demand far outstripping supply. "More than 70 per cent of those looking for a holiday cottage business have never run one before. Many move down from the Midlands and South East to start afresh. But many are pre-retirement age, and not in a position to give up their

jobs without replacing them with some form of income, and holiday cottages are the obvious answer."

"Of those looking for a property with income in the area, 87 per cent are in the market for holiday cottages to let, as opposed to bed and breakfasts or hotels. More than 65 per cent of buyers would consider properties that could be converted into cottages, such as those with barns and outbuildings."

Collette Charsley White, at Knight Frank, has a mailing list of 400 to 500 people looking for self-catering cottages to buy, with upwards of £350,000 to spend.

At Humberts Commercial in Taunton, Barry Lum says the main problem in the area is a lack of suitable properties coming on to the market. "We sold nine holiday letting complexes in the South West last year, ranging from a property with three letting cottages to a complex with 18 units," he says. "We currently have eight complexes on our books, and a register of more than 300 serious applicants who have yet to find the right property."

The attractions of Devon are obvious, according to Rick Marchand at Marchand Pettit in Salcombe, who says the majority of buyers are from London, the Home Counties and the Midlands. "Properties in Devon represent good value for money," he adds. "The area has quite a following, with hotspots such as the South Hams and Thurstlestone, and has something for everyone: sand beaches, boating in the Dart and Plym estuaries, golf, fishing and walking on Dartmoor and Exmoor. Those letting out holiday cottages can expect returns of about 8 per cent each year."



The Blacklocks outside their cottage complex

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CRICKET

Walker's runs help Kent to win at a canter

By MICHAEL HENDERSON

CANTERBURY (final day of four): Kent (20pts) beat Middlesex (1) by four wickets

WITH skill, no little will and the complicity of Middlesex, who reprieved the two batsmen who did most to win the game, Kent opened their championship season with a successful run-chase in the fourth innings of a match shortened by rain on the first three days. Left to make 252 in 60 overs by Ramprakash's well-judged declaration, they got there with eight balls to spare.

Fleming, who is not the worst man to have in the middle when quick runs are needed, made the winning hit when he hooked Fraser for six, beyond the two deep fielders positioned behind square, for such a stroke. Fraser looked thoroughly fed up. When he brought back a ball that bowled Wells between bat and pad six overs earlier, Kent were not certain of victory. By the time that Fleming cleared the rope, they could have got there in singles.

Perhaps Ramprakash was a touch too generous in making his decision for the pitch was good. In making it, he obviously wanted to give his bowlers the best chance of taking ten wickets and reckoned that, in the absence of Hooper and Ward, Kent lacked explosive shot-making potential at the top of the order.

Kent owed their win to two innings beside Fleming's, whose 40 off 44 balls supplied the final surge. Walker, the paddy left-hander, played effectively for his 68, particularly through the on side, and Wells, who made 77, rolled handsome strokes all round the wicket. Two of his offside boundaries, through point rather than extra cover, and placed as much as struck, were resounding.

His was the leading contribution, though Middlesex had the chance to nip his innings

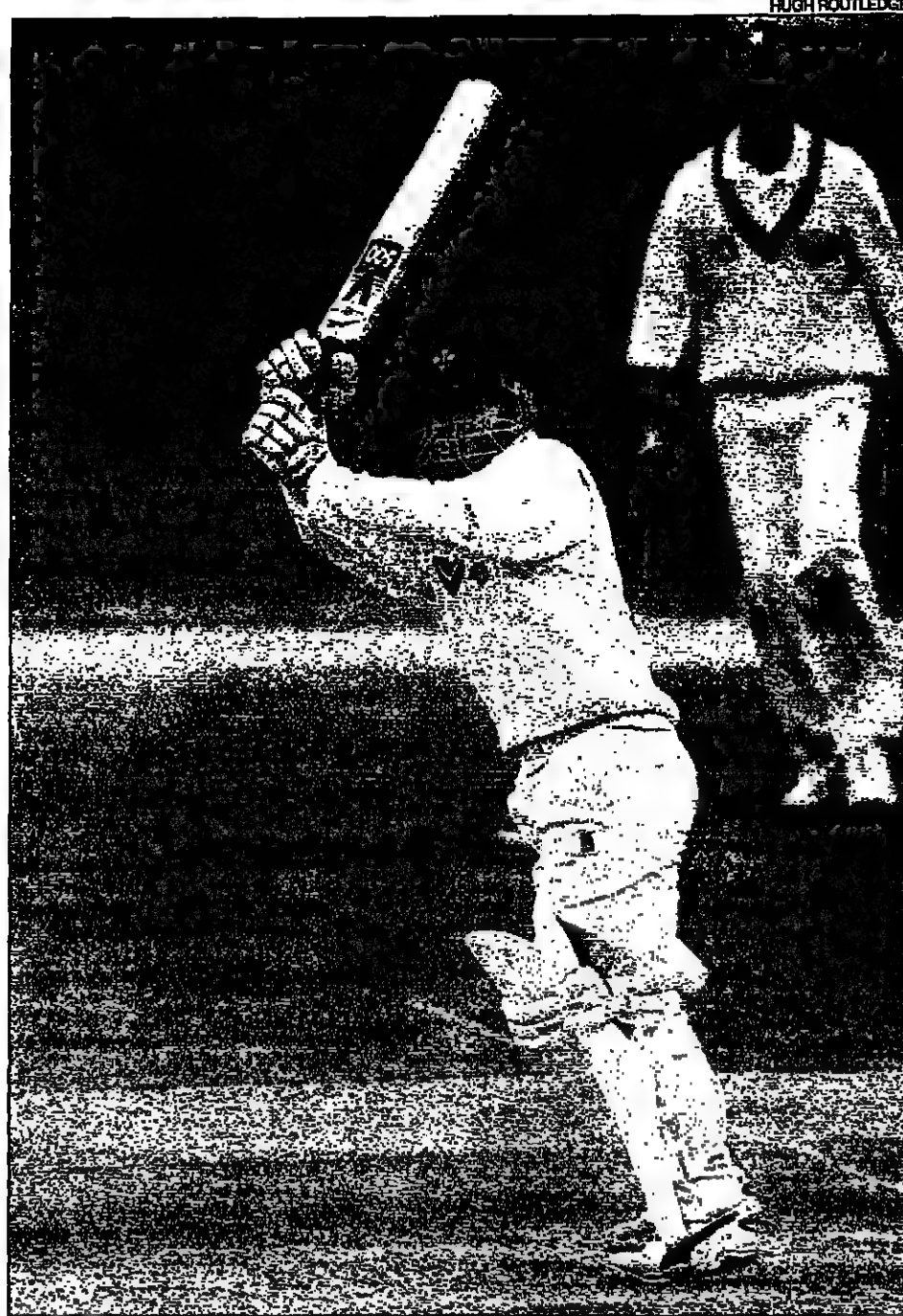
in the bud. He was beginning to move out of shallow waters, having got to 22, when he flashed hard at Hewitt and the ball flew high to Langer, then beyond Langer, at second slip. Chances like that don't often stick at the best of times. In weather that Langer, from Perth, must find distinctly parky, they don't stick at all.

Fleming was granted another life, in different circumstances. He had made nine when he drove Hewitt to long-off where Shah held a very good catch, realising as he caught it that the bowler had already been penalised for a no-ball. In his uncomplicated way, Fleming proceeded to work the ball around and, when it was there to hit, he hit it.

Kent will probably take most satisfaction from Walker's innings. He lost his way last season, making only 298 runs in the championship, with a single half-century. The year before he made 275 runs, unbeaten, in one innings against Somerset, which is the highest individual score made on this ground and a big feather for anybody wear in the brim of his hat.

By the time that Walker hoisted Johnson to deep square leg, Kent were properly engaged in their pursuit and though Ealham was unable to sustain it for long, and Marsh later offered a return catch, Wells had provided a firm enough foundation for Fleming to build on. They were aided, too, by a wild ball from Johnson, immediately after Marsh's dismissal, that went for six wickets.

Earlier in the day, before they came out again briefly to bump up the target to 252, the Middlesex first innings had petered out at 228, as Fleming and Phillips each finished with three wickets. Shah impressed, as he often does, in making 40 well-organised runs. Now that he is available for the whole summer, his game should benefit.



Brown, at his belligerent best, swings to leg during his 72-ball century

White whistles out Somerset

HEADINGLEY (final day of four): Yorkshire (23pts) beat Somerset (4) by 215 runs

GOOD news for Yorkshire has traditionally spelt good news for England, which means that their completion of a crushing win over Somerset shortly before lunch yesterday should be greeted with glee.

David Graveney and his fellow selectors will be delighted by the performance of Darren Gough and Craig White. The early indications are that Gough is back as the positive, rumbustious character of old.

"He batted very well to make 89 in difficult circumstances and he bowled well in

By BARNIE SPENCER

spells," David Byas, the Yorkshire captain, said. "He is still a bit match-rusty, but give him another game or two and he will be firing on all cylinders again. The important thing is that he is fit."

White, once described by Ray Illingworth as the best all-rounder in England, is less certain of his future at international level, but it was his bowling that snuffed out any lingering hopes that Somerset may have had of an escape as he took four for 13 in 12.2 overs.

With Somerset still needing an unlikely 305 to win, Paul Hutchison struck the first blow with the opening ball of

the day. It passed harmlessly outside the off stump, but Simon Ecclestone's trouble-some knee locked up and, after collapsing in a heap at the crease, he retired hurt.

He returned to the fray 65 minutes later, by which time Gough had removed Rose and White, who had dropped a simple catch from Firan

Holloway at first slip, made amends by bowling him off a defensive bottom edge and then clinging on to a firmly struck return drive from Marcus Trescothick.

White finished off the job by trapping Ecclestone leg before and, after some lusty blows from Kevin Shine, finding the edge of Andy Caddick's bat.

Ferocious assault by Brown lightens the gloom

By JOHN STERN

THE OVAL (final day of four): Surrey (7pts) drew with Northamptonshire (5)

ALISTAIR BROWN struck the fastest century in the county championship for almost two years, from 72 balls, and enlivened a day which began with hope of a positive, if contrived, result, but descended into childish farce in the final session.

Only 30 overs' play, in which Surrey made 88 for one, was possible on the first three days of this match yet, once play began yesterday, 25 minutes late, the most logical conclusion appeared to be for Adam Hollis and Kevin Curran, the captains, to arrive at a mutually agreeable target for the visitors to chase something in the region of 220 at about four runs an over.

It soon became apparent, though, as Surrey continued their innings, that no such agreement had been reached — although one could have easily mistaken the situation given the urgency of Brown's batting. Having acquired their fourth batting point by passing 350, Surrey declared.

Northamptonshire reached 44 for two before a bizarre declaration of their own at 11 minutes past five, ensuring they would have to follow on. Had they batted for another nine minutes, they could have declared and the captains could have agreed to call the game off given that there was no prospect of a result.

If Curran's objective was to show his annoyance at the lack of co-operation from his opposite number and deny Surrey the opportunity to pick up a bowling point, then this was achieved. The Northamptonshire opening batsmen emerged for the second time in just over an hour and lost the wicket of Alec Swann in the 13 remaining overs.

Brown arrived at the crease after Nadeem Shahid, having made 58, became Graeme Swann's first wicket in first-class cricket when he was stumped by David Ripley down the leg side off the first ball after lunch. Swann's elation at taking his maiden first-class wicket was swiftly punctured by Brown's ferocious hitting. Having conceded 20 runs off his first six overs, Swann went for 71 off his next seven.

He extracted encouraging bounce from the soft pitch when bowling to Shahid and Graham Thorpe, who made a calm, unbeaten 63. However, Brown was in one of those moods when bowling at him becomes a thankless and expensive business.

He hit four of his six sixes off Swann, one of which was the result of Mal Loye taking a catch but falling over the boundary in the process. As if to make a point, Brown hit the next ball straight over the boundary at the Vauxhall End. His first fifty took 46 balls, the second only 26. Thorpe was on eight when Brown came in and he added only 37 more in the time it took Brown to bring up his century.

Solanki's display adds insult to injuries for Essex

By IVO TENNANT

WORCESTER (final day of four): Worcestershire (23pts) beat Essex (4) by six wickets

VIKRAM SOLANKI, who was born in India and educated in Wolverhampton, is not yet a regular member of Worcestershire's side, even though on occasion he has batted with a sense of purpose and no little elegance. He demonstrated yesterday, in striking 53 off 26 balls, how adept he is at coping with a trying run chase.

Worcestershire, who needed 122 off 15 overs to beat Essex, did so with three balls to spare. They were greatly assisted, it was true, by injuries to Iliott, who could not bowl, Cowan, who managed only one over, and Danny Law, who slipped on the grassy outfield and hurt himself. The rain never relented and the light was pretty dreadful, too.

The umpires contentiously decided that the conditions were playable. The upshot was not merely an exciting finish, but the opportunity to see a 22-year-old uncapped batsman, who was playing only because of an injury to Spirling, strike the bowling of more experienced cricketers to great effect. Solanki's half-century included five sixes and two fours.

Much, seemingly, had depended on Hick giving Worcestershire a decent start after they had bowled out Essex for 310. In the very first over, in which Cowan conceded 19 runs — including two no balls — the acting captain pulled a six over square leg. He managed, in all, 25 off 19 balls before sending a skyer to the square-leg boundary off Iliott.

Cowan left the field suffering from back spasms incurred in that first over and, although Iliott took all four wickets to fall, the ball was too slippery for the spinners, whom Prichard was obliged to use. Solanki pulled Grayson's first ball for six and then hit him for two more, one of which Hussain caught as he fell into a boundary board.

Solanki was dropped when he had made 44. Danny Law damaging his right shoulder in the process, and was eventually held at long on, having added 62 in six overs with Hussain. Iliott had Leathdale leg-before and caught Lampitt in his follow-through in the same over, but Worcestershire had been given such a good start that they required only eight runs off the last two overs. Rhodes brought about victory.

In spite of the loss of 27 overs to rain, Worcestershire had taken the remaining seven Essex wickets by late afternoon. Stuart Law finished with 87, including two sixes and 11 fours, and Cowan batted as correctly as anybody in making 37 at the end of the innings. Twice Sherry, who finished with four wickets, was on a hat-trick. Indeed, in the space of 12 balls, he dismissed both Laws, Iliott and Grayson without conceding a run.

YESTERDAY'S SCOREBOARDS

Britannic Assurance county championship

Kent v Middlesex

CANTERBURY (final day of four): Kent (20pts) beat Middlesex (1) by four wickets

MIDDLESEX: First Innings

R A Kettleborough c Fulton b Fleming 27
J L Langer c Fulton b Fleming 44
J L Langer c Fulton b Fleming 25
M W Gearing c Fleming b Phillips 50
O A Shreeve b Fleming 40
D C Brown b Phillips 17
K R Brown b Fleming 17
R L Johnson b Phillips 1
J P Hewitt c and b Pant 6
J R C Fraser c Marsh b Pant 6
T F Bloomfield not out 5
Essex (to 10, w.c. 24) 228

Kent: First Innings

R A Kettleborough not out 11
Total (no wicket dec) 228
BOWLING: Walker 3-0-10-6; Pant 2-0-7-0

Surrey v Northamptonshire

THE OVAL (final day of four): Surrey (7pts) drew with Northamptonshire (5)

SURREY: First Innings

M A Boucher c G P Swann b Taylor 28
D G Gough c A J Hollis b Taylor 21
N Shahid c Ripley b G P Swann 59
G P Swann not out 50
D C Brown c Marsh b Taylor 100
A J Hollis c Taylor 7
B C Hollis not out 10
Essex (to 10, w.c. 24) 228

Northamptonshire: First Innings

R R Montgomerie c Brown 13
A J Swann c Bury b C Hollis 20
M B Loye not out 0
Essex (to 10, w.c. 24) 228

Worcestershire v Essex

WORCESTER (final day of four): Worcestershire (23pts) beat Essex (4) by six wickets

ESSEX: First Innings

*P J Prichard c Lampitt 34
D D Robinson c Law b Lampitt 19
N Hussain c Rhodes b Sherry 15
S G Law c Rhodes b Sherry 87
R J Turner c Sherry b Sherry 18
A R Pearson c and b White 9
M E Hoggard c and b White 26
D C Brown c and b White 19
K J Sherry c and b White 19
G J Sherry c and b White 19
Essex (to 10, w.c. 24) 228

Worcestershire: First Innings

V S Solanki c D R Law b Iliott 63
G R Hussain b Iliott 25
G R Hussain not out 10
D A Leathdale b Iliott 7
S R Lampitt c and b Iliott 0
R J Rhodes not out 5
Essex (to 10, w.c. 24) 228

Worcestershire: Second Innings

*P J Prichard c Lampitt 34
D D Robinson c Law b Lampitt 19
N Hussain c Rhodes b Sherry 15
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Sussex rewarded by their floodlit dry run

By SIMON WILDE

FLOODLIT cricket in England is not new — it took its first tentative steps at competitive level in the Axa Life League last year — but what was a departure in the day-night match staged at Hove yesterday was floodlit cricket in April. The idea that spectators would pay to sit for hours in temperatures that started low and finished at not much above freezing was ridiculed, but 2,000 souls duly did so and were rewarded with a decent contest.

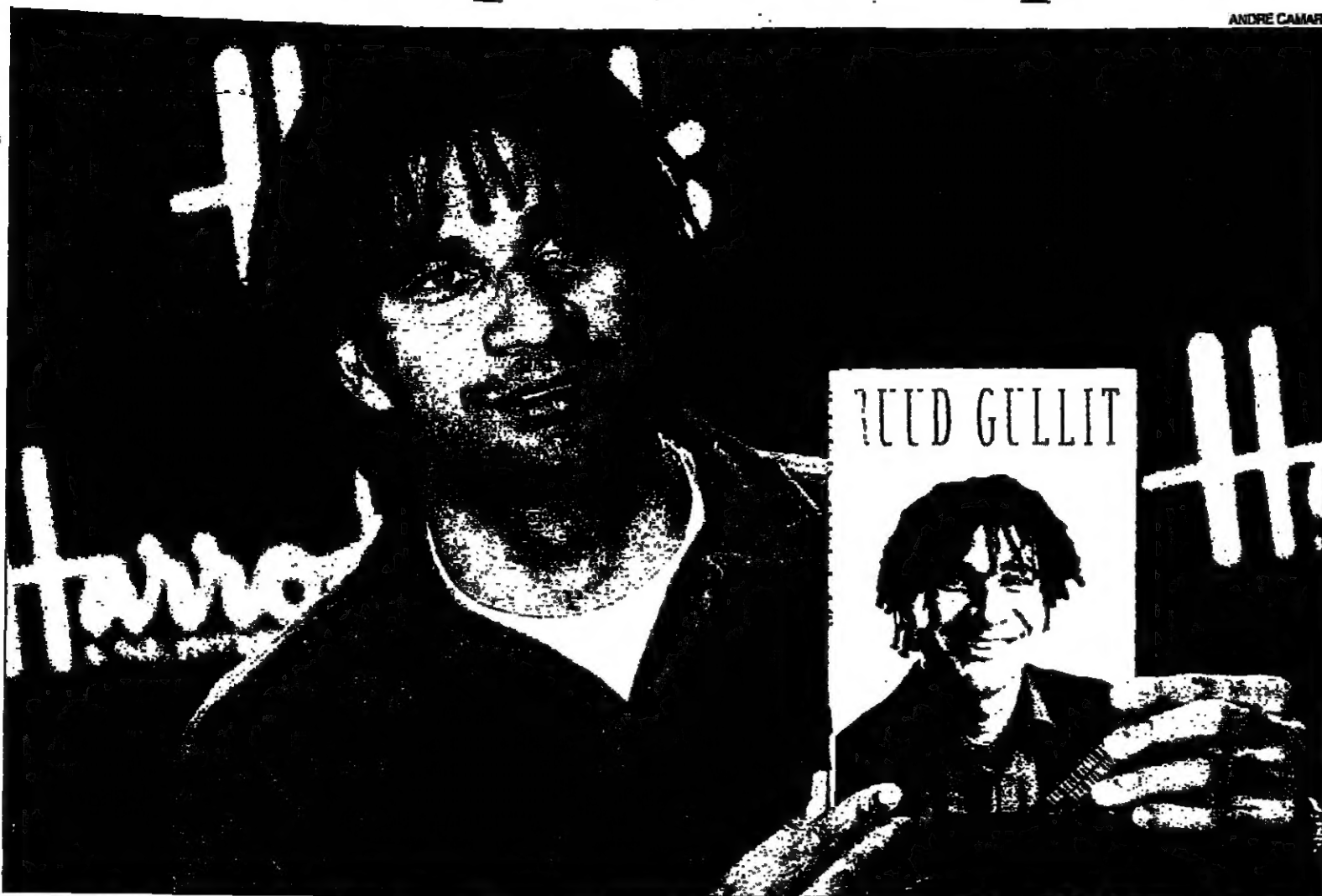
Oliver Holt finds the former Chelsea manager is far from yesterday's hero

Gullit closes chapter on blue period

I was busy in Books when Ruud Gullit arrived at Harrods yesterday to sign copies of his autobiography. The queue stretched all the way back through the Royal and History sections, past biographies called *The Saint who Sinned* (Raspoutine), *My Search for Meaning* (Kirk Douglas) and *The Last Governor* (Chris Patten). It ended, appropriately enough, in the Silver Room. At first, it was all flashlights and imprecations. "This way, Ruud," "Up here, Ruud," "Read the book, Ruud." The security guards got edgy. The women behind the counter tutted because customers were struggling to push their way towards the luxury washrooms. If you bought six copies of the book, though, they would waive the £1 fee and you could go to the toilet free.

Soon the crowd dispersed. A couple of American tourists bought copies and got them signed. They did not know that this was the first sighting of Ruud in London since that frenetic Friday the 13th in February, when he took his acrimonious leave of the capital and of Chelsea. The Americans had to ask a press officer whose book they had just bought. "He managed a very famous football club here, but he has just left," he said diplomatically.

The queue might have dwindled a little quicker than Ruud hoped, but its make-up emphasised that he was still all things to all men — one of the forerunners of the new football culture, a personality who transcended age, sex, race and club loyalty. Everyone used to like him and, yesterday, everyone still liked him. He signed for old ladies, for young men with shaved heads, for businessmen on their lunch break, for a chef who proffered his white hat, for supporters who wanted their Chelsea shirts initialed. They all shook his hand and offered him words of encouragement and said that they



Gullit proved that he was still a popular figure, even among non-football fans, by drawing large crowds to his book signing in London yesterday

were sorry about what had happened. Gullit looked a little less self-assured than he had. He tired faster of the cloying demands for his attention. For a while, as he signed and smiled, it seemed that he would make no public pronouncements on the simmering row between him and Ken Bates, the Chelsea chairman, that is boiling up again. But then Gullit was ushered into a small staff-room near Elymology and Etiquette, where he could speak to the press.

He admitted that he had been hurt by parts of Bates' notes in the Chelsea magazine last Sunday that had described him as "a part-time playboy manager". Bates went on to suggest that Gullit "carried out his lucrative commercial contracts at the expense of his training" — that much was obvious to everybody in his last game at Highbury.

Gullit was standing now, ready to go, because it was the last interview of the day, but he was keen to reply. "I saw it," he said. "I feel hurt by it.

Extremely. If you are a playboy, you have no time. You cannot be a successful manager, you cannot win the FA Cup because you do not have the time. It is not possible. You cannot be both.

"What he said is something that is very untrue. That is what I do not like. You have to tell the truth because this sort of thing can hurt your reputation. I don't really have anything against him, but I think he has something against me. I think it is all a misunderstanding. I think he has been badly misinformed

by people who did not want me to be there. If he had talked to me, he would have known how dedicated I was."

And for those that thought any of Chelsea's recent successes might have been down to Gianluca Vialli, the new player-manager, Gullit had an immediate riposte. "They wanted to try a different way of playing after I left," he said, "and then they lost five games. So then they went back to the rotation system I had. Now they can build on what I built for a long period. I still want them to win, of course. It is not

the players' fault what happened."

One of those players, Michael Duberry, Chelsea's towering central defender, had happened upon the throng by chance before Gullit arrived. He was shopping with his girlfriend. "I might come up later when it's a bit quieter," he said, with a smile. "I hope he still remembers me."

Yesterday, up there on the second floor, as the man whose face has adorned a thousand London buses returned to his old haunts, the memories were all ours.

Future meets the present in youth final

By Nick Szczepanik

SPECTATORS at youth team matches usually look for stars of the future. Those attending the two-legged final of the FA Youth Cup between Blackburn Rovers and Everton next month may see one or two stars of the present.

Everton, who eliminated Leeds United, the holders, in the semi-finals, will be able to field at least three players with FA Carling Premiership experience this season. Danny Cadamarteri, whose early-season purple patch in the first team included a goal against Liverpool, Richard Dunne and Michael Ball are all eligible as they were under 18 on August 1 last year.

Ball is unlikely to play, however, because of first-team demands. "We want to give a chance to the kids who have got us this far," Colin Harvey, the Everton director of youth coaching, said.

The final this year, the 46th, is as likely as any to feature a big name of the future. Previous winning finalists have included Paul Gascoigne, who helped Newcastle United beat Watford in 1985. The 1996 final, between Liverpool and West Ham United, was graced by four current Premiership regulars in Rio Ferdinand, Frank Lampard, Jamie Carragher and Michael Owen.

From the current squad of Everton possibilities, Harvey picked out Francis Jeffers, who made his first-team debut at Old Trafford on Boxing Day and is expected to have recovered from a chest virus in time for the final.

Producing one's own talent can, of course, save clubs a fortune, a welcome development even to those not short of a bob or two. "In

some ways, we built from the top down," Robert Kelly, the Blackburn youth team coach, said. "It was a buying club, but the board has now decided that the way forward is through youth. Bobby Downes, the youth development officer, who has come in this season, is the best in the country; we want to produce. Marlon [Broome, the England Under-21 defender] and Damien [Duff, the Ireland forward] in five years are not enough."

The signs in the second leg of their semi-final, away to Peterborough United on Monday, which Blackburn won 1-0, were promising. Keith Brown, the Scotland



Under-18 central defender, was missing, but Martin Taylor, his defensive partner, dealt with the airborne regulars, while David Dunn, a mature midfield presence, and Gary Hamilton, the forward who scored the only goal of the game, lived up to growing reputations.

Such occasions, Kelly said, help players' development. "It's a great test. We've got to find out about their temperament before their debut in front of 25,000 people; a run in the Youth Cup gives us that chance."

The first leg of the final is at Ewood Park on May 1, with the return at Goodison Park on May 7.

Hartson has his ban extended into next season

By Our Sports Staff

JOHN HARTSON, the West Ham United striker, will miss the first FA Carling Premiership match of next season after having his ban extended by one game to five yesterday. Hartson was found guilty of misconduct by the Football Association after being sent off by Paul Alcock, the referee, for elbowing Pier Frandsen, of Bolton Wanderers, at the Reebok Stadium on February 21.

The Wales player had already been suspended for three matches for punching Igor Simac, the Derby County defender, at Upton Park on April 11, a mandatory punishment that was originally stretched to four games by the FA because it was his second red card of the season. At the hearing, Hartson was also fined £1,500 and ordered to pay costs.

Gordon Strachan, the Coventry City manager, has expressed with a warning after leading guilty to an FA charge of making insulting comments to Stephen Lodge, the referee. Strachan called Lodge "a joke" and "an absolute disgrace" after Coventry's 2-2 draw with Arsenal at

Highfield Road in January. He was angry because the official refused the home side a penalty and later sent off Paul Williams, the Coventry defender, for a professional foul on Dennis Bergkamp.

Strachan accepted the charge of insulting behaviour when he appeared at the FA disciplinary hearing at a London hotel yesterday, but he made a convincing plea of mitigation and the FA disciplinary committee warned him as to his future behaviour after also taking into account his previously unblemished record since becoming a manager 18 months ago.

Strachan apologised to the Barmsey referee within days of the match over the personal nature of his outburst. He said: "I shouldn't have said he was an absolute disgrace, but that he made some disgraceful decisions." He also promised to show more restraint when criticising match officials in future.

Two Nationwide League managers were given improved contracts yesterday. Malcolm Spence signed a three-year deal with Oxford United after steering the first division club to safety and Mel Machin was awarded a three-year contract by Bournemouth, despite their Auto Windscreens Shield final defeat by Grimsby Town on Sunday. Swindon Town, the first division club, have signed Adam Willis, the central defender, on a free transfer from Coventry. The 21-year-old has been on trial at the County Ground after being recommended to Steve McMahon, the Swindon manager, by Brian Borrows, another former Coventry defender.



Hartson: elbow

Brown starts to sharpen axe

By Kevin McCarrar

THE preparatory matches that are supposed to hone players for the World Cup finals will also sharpen a manager's ruthlessness. The match against Finland at Easter Road tonight continues the process of elimination as Craig Brown pares his Scotland squad. However, he has already announced a readiness to take harsh decisions.

Until Ally McCoist withdrew, injured, from the B match with Norway yesterday, it had been assumed that the veteran forward would be named in the party for France. Given that he also called off from a B game last month, against Wales, his suitability is now in doubt. Brown was careful not to allow McCoist's fears.

"We will have to see how he does for his club in the next few weeks," the manager said, "but we also have to see how others are doing. We need to look at the overall position. Two months ago, everyone was writing McCoist off. We never did that, but now we decide that he would definitely be included, by coming back into the Rangers team, he has enhanced his prospects, but we have to ask if he is better than the other candidates."

"If necessary, I will go to watch Scott Booth playing for Utrecht against Ajax in Amsterdam on May 10, because that will be a real test for him."

Brown is keenly aware that some of his

predecessors erred when taking players who were past their best to the World Cup. At 26, Booth, who is on loan to Utrecht from Borussia Dortmund, holds an advantage over McCoist, 35.

Although the veteran has been fêted since returning to the Rangers team last month, Brown will have noted that six of the seven goals that McCoist has scored subsequently have come against Motherwell, Dundee, Dunfermline Athletic and Hibernian. These were not ideal adversaries for a man attempting to establish his credentials for the Scotland side.

In the 1-0 defeat against Aberdeen at Pittodrie on Sunday, McCoist was ineffectual. He may yet be in the squad for France this summer, but Brown has reminded him that he has much to prove before he can be awarded that place. Others, too, are aware of the need to convince Brown.

"The worst thing is thinking about not

SCOTLAND

J. Leighton (Aberdeen) — C. Calderwood (Tottenham Hotspur), C. Hendry (Blackburn Rovers), C. Duff (Derby County) — J. McGovern (Cardiff), W. McTear (Blackburn Rovers), P. Lambert (Cardiff), J. Collins (AS Monaco), T. Boyd (Cardiff) — G. Duffie (Rangers), S. Booth (Borussia Dortmund).

Argentina need confidence boost

FROM MATT DICKINSON IN DUBLIN

AS ARGENTINA flew into Dublin this week, Daniel Passarella was one more national manager who appears to be struggling under the weight of mounting expectations. Lifting the World Cup in 1978 may have given Passarella presidential status in his own country, but the credit is beginning to run low.

His side slumped to an embarrassing 2-1 defeat in Israel last week and failure to beat the Ireland at Lansdowne Road tonight will ensure awkward questions.

The first — and one that watchers of the Champions' League this season will also want answered — is how he can afford to ignore Fernando Redondo, the gifted playmaker, whose skills have guided Real Madrid to the final of the European Cup this season. What started as a petty squabble over Redondo's refusal to have his hair cut has escalated into a full-blown feud.

A renowned disciplinarian, Passarella has also clashed with Gabriel Batistuta,

the Fiorentina striker. While Batistuta is expected to lead the attack against Ireland tonight, he has lost the captaincy to Diego Simeone, of Internazionale, and played only a bit-part in the qualifying campaign, in which Passarella used 46 players.

Twice the leading scorer in Serie A, Batistuta is certain to be involved in the World Cup, but the form of Hernan Crespo, top scorer with Parma this season but injured at present, has ensured that he is not Argentina's only source of goals.

His place may come under even more pressure if Claudio Caniggia, for so long

Maradona's foil, makes an unlikely comeback on to the international scene. Having recovered from a succession of injuries, the veteran striker is rediscovering his best form with Boca Juniors.

Having failed to qualify for the finals, Mick McCarthy, the Ireland manager, has fewer immediate worries and will take this opportunity to field a team containing several unproven talents. Kevin Kilbane, the West Bromwich Albion midfielder player, and Mark Kinsella, who has had such an excellent season with Charlton Athletic, will make their Lansdowne Road debuts, but most attention will be on Robbie Keane, 17, the Wolverhampton Wanderers striker.

Keane, who will be partnered by Niall Quinn, is not even a regular at Molinieu, but McCarthy believes that the teenager is ready to stride into the international arena as he wins his second cap. "I've no doubt he will thrive on the big stage," he said. "He's that sort of player."

IRELAND

S. Gowan (Newcastle United) — D. Keane (Manchester United), S. Gowan (Newcastle United), P. Reid (Liverpool), S. Saurer (Aston Villa) — G. Kelly (Luton United), M. Forster (Charlton Athletic), L. Conboy (Derby County), R. Kilbane (West Bromwich Albion) — R. Keane (Wolverhampton Wanderers), N. Quinn (Sunderland).

Schmeichel declares himself fit after all

PETER SCHMEICHEL, the Manchester United goalkeeper, could be fit for the rest of the FA Carling Premiership championship race after all. Schmeichel injured his thigh and was forced off early in the 1-1 draw with Newcastle United at Old Trafford on Saturday, but he hopes to play for Denmark in their World Cup warm-up game against Norway in Copenhagen tonight.

"It is me alone who makes the decision," Schmeichel said. "It is important for me to play this match and I am working day and night to be ready. I can already feel that I am getting better."

However, United are preparing to lose Ronny Johnsen from the Premiership run-in. The Norway international is flying back from Copenhagen in an attempt to clear up a knee problem that threatens his World Cup prospects.

Ken Ramsden, the United spokesman, said: "He will be coming back to England sooner rather than later and we will have our medical people look at him. Any decision on an operation will be taken in the best interests of the club and, of course, the player. Clearly, we are mindful of the importance to Ronny as far as the World Cup is concerned."

Norwegian Football Association medical experts have suggested that United may have failed to diagnose the injury after Johnsen was carried off with an ankle injury during the draw with Liverpool on Good Friday.

Trygve Kase, the Norway team doctor, said: "Ronny was in so much pain from the ankle it completely overshadowed the knee. If the operation is carried out within a couple of weeks, he should have recovered in time for the World Cup."

Anderson's late goal earns share of spoils

Scotland Under-21..... 1
Finland Under-21..... 1

By A Correspondent

RUSSELL ANDERSON, the Aberdeen defender, headed a dramatic equaliser a minute from time at Stark's Park yesterday to end a miserable run of defeats for Scotland Under-21. Anderson's late intervention, from a free kick by his Dundee namesake, Ian, produced an unlikely finish to a game of few chances and little quality.

For long periods, it seemed that the Scots were destined for another demoralising reverse after defeats by Belarus, Latvia and Denmark on their past three outings. They made the worst possible start, conceding a goal within five minutes, created by the Finns' outstanding player, Teemu Tainio, of Auxerre.

Tainio created panic in the home defence by beating Jamie Buchanan, the Aberdeen full back, on the edge of the penalty area and, when his cross was flicked on to the far post, Janne Hietanen, the full back, was there to bundle the ball over the line.

Scotland, prompted by Barry Ferguson, went close to an equaliser twice in a minute, first when Craig Easson headed over from a cross by Grant Brebner and then when Craig Dargo, the Scots' most lively forward, struck his shot just too high, after being teed up by Ferguson.

Mark Burchill volleyed over the crossbar early in the second half and Lee McCulloch went close four minutes from time before Anderson's header at the far post brought late relief for Tommy Craig, the Scotland Under-21 manager.

Gillespie urged to ignore abuse

KEITH GILLESPIE, the Northern Ireland winger, has been told by Lawrie McMenemy, his manager, to ignore the criticism of supporters at international matches. The Newcastle United player has suffered abuse from fans who feel his performances for his country have not matched those for his club.

McMenemy believes too much is expected of the 23-year-old, who could again be a target when Northern Ireland play Switzerland at Windsor

Park tonight. "People are watching him on television playing for Newcastle and so their expectancy is high," McMenemy said. "The man on the terraces wants to know why he's not doing it like he is in the Premiership. The reasons are that he's not surrounded by Premiership players with Northern Ireland and the opposition is harder." Steve Lomas, the Northern Ireland captain, added: "There's a lot of expectancy on his shoulders with him being

dubbed the new George Best and that makes it even harder for him. But we feel he's doing a very good job for the team."

Switzerland are expected to include Stéphane Henchoz, of Blackburn Rovers, and Ramon Vega, of Tottenham Hotspur, in defence.

NORTHERN IRELAND (probable 4-4-2): A. Fenech (Blackburn Rovers) — J. Lamine (Dundee United), A. Hughes (Newcastle United), C. Murdoch (Preston North End), S. Morrissey (Queens Park Rangers), K. Gillespie (Newcastle United), S. Lomas (Wolves), N. Lanyon (Lancaster City), M. Park (Rangers), J. Quinn (West Bromwich Albion).

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TONIGHT'S LIVE INTERNATIONAL ACTION

8/13 ENGLAND	9/4 DRAW	PORTUGAL 4/1
CORRECT SCORE	W/TIME F/TIME	FIRST GOALSCORER
ENGLAND .. ENGLAND 11/8	ENGLAND .. ENGLAND 11/8	3/1 .. SHEARER (E)
ENGLAND .. DRAW 14/1	ENGLAND .. DRAW 14/1	4/1 .. OWEN (E)
ENGLAND .. PORTUGAL 40/1	ENGLAND .. PORTUGAL 40/1	9/2 .. SHERRINGHAM (E)
DRAW .. ENGLAND 4/1	DRAW .. ENGLAND 4/1	13/2 .. SCHOLLES (E)
DRAW .. DRAW 4/1	DRAW .. DRAW 4/1	8/1 .. PINTO (P)
DRAW .. PORTUGAL 10/1	DRAW .. PORTUGAL 10/1	9/1 .. CADETE (P)
PORTUGAL .. ENGLAND 25/1	PORTUGAL .. ENGLAND 25/1	10/1 .. BECKHAM (E)
PORTUGAL .. DRAW 14/1	PORTUGAL .. DRAW 14/1	10/1 .. COSTA (P)
PORTUGAL .. PORTUGAL 9/1	PORTUGAL .. PORTUGAL 9/1	12/1 .. FIGO (P)
Other scores on request.		11/2 .. NO GOALSCORER

Other scores on request. Odds valid if match not completed. Odds good so long as correct.

LATEST ODDS ON WILLIAM HILL TV TEXT • Teletext on CH4 661/662/663

Eubank's high quality of mercy

Last week I wrote about the phenomenon of choking, the inability to win when you have your opponent at your mercy. Jana Novotna, Greg Norman, Newcastle United and now, it seems, Manchester United. Chokers all.

This week, let us take the question of choking a step further and examine mercy itself. On Saturday, Chris

per-cut, Watson was taken to hospital, underwent emergency surgery, suffered a brain haemorrhage and was left a damaged man.

Eubank is forever haunted by this terrible event. Eubank is a rum cove, no doubt about that, but, despite a pile of evidence to the contrary, it turns out that Eubank is not a Martini at all. He's a human being and — in defiance of his

'Such actions would arouse derision in most sports'

own best interests, these being both financial gain and the avoidance of pain — he showed one of the greatest qualities in the human repertoire. Which is to say mercy.

This is a trait that turns up now and again in boxing. Perhaps the most famous case of all is Muhammad Ali's last fight. His opponent, Larry Holmes had The Greatest at his mercy. And did not destroy him. Holmes held back, and won as gently as possible.

People said afterwards that Holmes could not bring himself to destroy a legend. I suspect that what held him

back was his reluctance to destroy a human being. In most sports, such actions would arouse derision. Novotna's choke has become one of the staples of sporting humour. Norman's collapse in the Masters aroused a kind of contemptuous pity.

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SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

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Newcastle's failure to win the title after holding a 12-point lead became another of the defining moments of sport. Now, as Manchester United surrender the lead as the

championship race passes The Elbow, we have the privilege of watching what appears to be another corporate choke.

But is it mercy? Are Manchester United being merciful to their late-season opponents? Do they wish to spare their opponents pain and suffering? Certainly, something deep inside the team has rejected the role of the emperor: they are no longer the cold, strutting, merciless monarchs of all they survey.

That self-image went with the departure of a certain Frenchman: Eric Cantona, the man who had no ruth.

Is mercy in sport a matter of personal weakness? Or personal greatness? Certainly, in the chokes that are an ineluctable aspect of a duelling sport such as tennis, reluctance to win can come, at least in part, from a reluctance to inflict on an opponent the trauma of loss.

Compassion is a great virtue and we should not scoff at it when we find it, no matter in

what form. If there is a hint of compassion in a game played with fury, we should acknowledge it and, in a mild way, honour it.

But sport is an arena for the triumphalist and the expression "ruthless champion" is of necessity a tautology. Once we have doffed a cap to the compassion of Novotna, we must acknowledge that it is right that this is so. We are, after all, only playing tennis.

It is a cod duel, football a phoney war, a dismissed batsman is not really dead.

But boxing, of course, is real. Not a cod duel: a real one. In boxing, death is no metaphor.

And nor is mercy. In a cod duel, Eubank would have been a laughing stock, another Novotna. After Saturday's fight, no one laughed at Eubank, covered in blood and temporarily blind in one eye.

Eubank is no choker. He is a man of mercy. Which is greater than being a champion, even if they don't pay you for it.

'In boxing, death is no metaphor. Nor is mercy'

TENNIS: BRIEF ENCOUNTER EMPHASISES BRITON'S CLAY-COURT WEAKNESS

Henman's failings resurface

FROM JULIAN MUSCAT
TENNIS CORRESPONDENT
IN MONTE CARLO

TIM HENMAN was rudely reminded yesterday that the disciplines of clay-court matchplay are more than he can muster. Despite a brief late flurry against the wiles of Galo Blanco, Henman played with a singular lack of conviction and was left to reflect, after his first-round exit, that big changes are required if he is to make a mark.

After Blanco, of Spain, prevailed 6-2, 6-4, Henman maintained that he was happy to tackle the steep learning curve. However, that may be more painful than he imagines. This surface makes greater mental demands on a player and Henman, as has become evident this year, is not the quickest thinker on his feet.

On this occasion, Henman could not find a way through Blanco's searing top spin, which kept the Briton pinned to the back of the court. His plan of attack was neutralised and he could conjure no replacement. The Spaniard, world ranked No 59, was never seriously tested.

Henman's inexperience on clay was not helped by his decision to compete on the hard courts of Tokyo last week. It was as well that, from 5-1 down in the second set, he won three games in a row to revive his morale. "I have got to think of lots of ways of mixing my game up," he said. "There were times [in the



Henman, ill at ease on the clay of Monte Carlo, cannot hide his disappointment at losing in straight sets to Blanco

match] when I really did realise just how big a learning process it is going to be." If Blanco, a quarter-finalist at the French Open last year, made an uncomfortable opponent for Henman, the Briton's defeat was not solely attributable to the alien surface.

Henman was below par in service, backhand, volley and overhead. He can only improve, although the trip to Japan, which left him woefully short of clay-court practice, put him on the back foot from the start. Greg Rusedski opens his clay-court season today against Boris Becker.

Andre Agassi's determination to regain his former status saw him enter the doubles with Petr Korda. Victory in that discipline on Monday evening sharpened Agassi for a first-round test against Todd Martin and he looked inspired in routing his compatriot, winner of the Barcelona Open last week, 6-2, 6-1.

Martin clung to parity by his fingertips in the opening exchanges, but Agassi quickly sized up the Martin service to render his opponent toothless. "Andre takes the ball so early that it feels like you are still in

your follow-through when the ball is back at your feet," Martin said later. Some have been surprised that Agassi, in ebullient form all year, has not yet landed an important title since he returned to tennis full-time. However, the American's game may only just be reaching its zenith. If the winning habit is not easily captured, Agassi is edging closer towards it with every outing.

"You get a lot of confidence if you feel in your mind that you can handle any situation," Agassi said. "It has been a few years since I was in contention for the grand slams. Now I am getting back to a place where it is becoming much more of a realistic goal." Agassi's progress faces a

tough test today when he confronts Pete Sampras in the second round. When Agassi drifted from the game, the assumption was that Sampras would rule supreme. Now, however, it appears that Sampras is on the wane. He has not played on clay this year and has yet to win a match in three visits here.

By contrast, no contemporary player has won more matches here than Thomas Muster, three times a previous winner. Muster approached the tournament in decent form, yet he was dismantled 6-0, 6-3 yesterday by Carlos Moyá, seeded No 14.

Muster later spoke of being mentally out of sorts. If winning is a habit hard to acquire, losing is one more difficult to break. Let us hope that Henman, given a better preparation for his next clay-court tournament, does not endure a repeat performance.

EQUESTRIANISM

King to miss Badminton

MARY KING, one of the favourites for the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials next month, has had to withdraw from the event after her horse, King Solomon, sustained a tendon injury competing at the Belton Horse Trials in Lincolnshire last Sunday.

The latest setback, which

follows the withdrawal two weeks ago of Star Appeal, her top horse, means that King, the runner-up last year and the winner in 1992, will be without a ride at Badminton for the first time since 1988. "It's very disappointing," King, 37, said yesterday.

Although Badminton would have been King Solomon's first four-star event, the ten-year-old gelding was among the favourites for the £26,000 first prize. Of the five three-day events in which he has competed, he has won four and was runner-up in the fifth. Three of those wins have been at three-star level — most recently in Achelschwang, Germany, last September.

Both King Solomon and Star Appeal, who has a similar injury, are now on controlled exercise for three months after examination by Sue Dyson at Newmarket. They will be scanned again in June to see whether they can compete this autumn. Star Appeal, on which King won a team gold medal at the Open European championship last September, is a leading contender for the team for the world championship, which is due to take place in Rome in October.

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TELEVISION CHOICE

ESP? It's all in the mind

Counterblast

BBC2, 7.30pm

Mounting the television soap box tonight is Robert Matthews, a science journalist, who argues that extrasensory perception should be taken a lot more seriously than a blinkered science establishment has been prepared to allow. Matthews bases his case on research being carried out at the University of Edinburgh. Experiments in transmitting images to a person in a sealed room have produced a success rate far in excess of anything attributable to chance. Matthews also calls as evidence examples of telepathy which, though inexplicable, cannot be discounted, such as Alex Guinness's eerily accurate prediction that James Dean would die in a car crash. But the programme also allows Peter Atkins, a professor at Oxford, to retort that ESP is nonsense and scientists should not waste their time on it.

Midsummer Murders

ITV, 8.00pm

Moving the John Nettles detective series from Sunday to Wednesday, and then for one night only, may suggest a lack of faith in a show that perfectly fulfils the requirements of an Agatha Christie for the 1990s. Set in pretty English villages where murder seems somehow tasteless, Caroline Graham's whodunnits are elaborately constructed variations on the classic theme of victim and half a dozen suspects. But Christie would never have featured the lesbian couple who are prominent in tonight's tale of a failed village entrepreneur (Roger Allam) with a string of angry creditors. Credit Graham's novel, adapted by Douglas Watkinson, for defying expectations and in true Christie fashion using, though not of course, Nettles's easygoing Inspector Barnaby, on completely the wrong track.

Chef for a Night

Channel 4, 8.30pm

Getting amateurs to compete with the experts has long been a staple of the television schedules and this latest variant promises to be just as watchable as the previous ones. The idea is that an amateur chef takes over a restaurant for a night and tries to show the professionals a thing or two. The series



Chef Silvena Rowe (C4, 8.30pm)

kicks off at Mezzo in London, one of Sir Terence Conran's enterprises, and the rookie chef is an exciting Bulgarian called Silvena Rowe. She vents her scorn on the Mezzo's puddings, calling them dull, and she is convinced she can do better. She is so loud and pushy that you feel sorry for the Mezzo's resident chefs and almost hope that the upstart's white chocolate mousse comes to grief. But as the diners resolutely reject Rowe's special, for the apple cake and sticky date pudding she so despises, sympathies start to shift.

Whose Line Is It Anyway?

Channel 4, 10.30pm

This is the ninth series of the improvisation game on television, and it was on radio before that, proving that the format is nothing if not durable. As spontaneous wit goes, there is still nothing to beat another radio show, *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue*, but *Whose Line?* offers humour of a broader kind and if the contestants really do have no idea what they will be asked to do, the level of invention is impressively high. The new series is reassuringly familiar, both in content and personnel. Clive Anderson presides with his usual glib, still making silly jokes about the score, and a noisy audience is allowed to chime in with suggestions. Tonight's team consists of Stephen Frost and three performers from across the Atlantic, Greg Proops, Colin Mochrie and Ryan Stiles. Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

The Mike Harding Show

Radio 2, 8.00pm

The revamp of the Radio 2 schedules that is under way this week involves three new programmes for tonight, though their hosts will be familiar. Andy Peebles and Johnnie Walker have shows at 9pm and 10pm and the evening is launched by the singer-songwriter Mike Harding, taking charge of what is now the main Radio 2 folk slot. Harding points out that there is an increasing number of chart bands with their roots in folk music, a remark which suggests his show is going to have a broader base than some of the folk purists would like. However, that sums up the whole approach of Radio 2 under Controller James Moll and the ratings suggest his attempt to attract the older audience that Radio 1 now ignores is coming off.

RADIO 1

6.30am Chris Moyles 12.00 Jo Whiteley. Includes 12.30pm Newsbeat 2.00 Mark Radcliffe 4.00 Dave Pearce 6.30 Steve Lamacq: The Evening Session 8.30 Movie Update with Mark Kermode 8.40 John Peel. Includes a session from Super Furry Animals 10.30 Mary Anne Hobbs 1.00am Charlie Jordan 4.00 Clive Wilson

RADIO 2

6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 8.30 Ken Bruce 11.30 Jimmy Young 1.30pm Debbie Thresher 3.00 Ed Stewart 5.00 John Dunn 7.00 Nick Hancock 8.00 The Mike Harding Show 9.00 Andy Peebles 9.30 Andy Peebles 10.00 A new series 10.00 Johnnie Walker 10.30 Richard Allinson 12.05am Steve Madden 3.00 Alex Lester

RADIO 5 LIVE

6.00am The Breakfast Programme 9.00 Nicky Campbell 12.00 Midday with Mel 2.00pm Ruzic on Five 4.00 Nationwide with Julian Worrick 7.00 News Extra 7.30 John Inverdale's Football Night: England vs Portugal. Coverage of the World Cup warm-up match. Plus, news from Scotland vs Finland, and the National Lottery Draw. 11.00am Late Night Live 1.00am Up All Night with Rhod Sharp 8.00 Morning Reports

VIRGIN RADIO

7.00am Chris Evans 10.00 Russ Williams 1.00pm Paul Doyle 4.00 Robin Barlow 7.30 Ray Charles 10.00 Mark Forster 2.00am Cairn Jones 5.00 Jeremy Clark

TALK RADIO

6.30am Kirsty Young with Bill Overton 8.00 Scott Chisholm 12.00 Lorraine Kelly 2.00pm Tommy Boyd 4.00 Peter Dinkley 6.00am News 9.00 James Whale 1.00pm Ian Collins 5.00 The Early Show

WORLD SERVICE

7.00am News 7.15 Inflight 7.30 World of Football 8.00 News 8.15 On the Shelf 8.30 Mandarin Live 9.00 News. (648 only) News in German 9.10 Pause for Thought 9.15 Westway 9.30 Everywoman 10.00 News 10.05 World Business Report 10.15 The Farming World 10.30 My First 100 Days 10.45 Sports Roundup 11.00 Newsdesk 11.30 The One Show 12.00 Newsdesk 12.30pm World of Football 1.00 News. (648 only) News in German 1.05 World Business Report 1.15 Britain Today 1.30 Soundbyte 1.45 Sports Roundup 2.00 Newshour 3.00 News 3.05 Outlook 3.30 Magazine 4.00 News 4.05 Sports Roundup 4.15 Performance 4.30 Everywoman. (648 only) News in German 5.00 Europe Today 5.30 World Business Report 5.45 Britain Today 6.00 News 6.15 Inflight 6.30 F.O.C.C. (648 only) News in German 6.45 Sports Roundup 7.00 Newsdesk 7.30 News 8.00 News 8.01 Outlook 8.25 Pause for Thought 8.30 Multitrack X-Press 8.00 Newshour 10.00 News 10.05 World Business Report 10.15 Britain Today 10.30 On Screen 11.00 Newsdesk 11.30 Inflight 11.45 Sports Roundup 12.00 News 12.05am Outlook 12.30 Multitrack X-Press 1.00 Newsdesk 1.30 F.O.C.C. 1.45 Britain Today 2.00 Newsdesk 2.30 Omnibus 3.00 Newsdesk 3.30 Mandarin Books 4.00 News 4.05 World Business Report 4.15 Sports Roundup 4.30 The World Today 5.00 The World Today

CLASSIC FM

6.00am Breakfast with Bailey 6.00 Henry Kelly. Michael Barry prepares steak and kidney pudding and Record of the Week features the best of the new releases 12.00 Lunchtime Request. Jane Jones introduces listeners' favourite places 2.00pm Concerto. Beethoven (Piano Concerto No 2 in B major) 3.00 Michael Mapon. Including Afternoon Romance and Continuous Classics 6.30 Newswatch. Headlines, arts news and gossip, presented by John Burningham 7.00 Smooth Classics at Seven with John Burningham 8.00 Evening Concert Smyth (Overture, The Wreckers; Serenade in D major); Fanny Mendelssohn (Piano Trio in D major); Hildagard of Bingen (O Nobilissima Virginitas); Tallieries (Concerto for Harp and Orchestra); Smyth (March of the Women) 11.00am Mann at Night 2.00am Concerto (i) 3.00 Mark Griffiths

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air, with Petroc Trelawny. Includes Debussy (Clair de Lune); Mozart (Piano in D, K320); Schubert (Erlkönig) 9.00 Masterworks, with Peter Hobbay. Includes Vivaldi (Concerto in D minor, RV129); Handel (Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne, Elmsl Source of Light (Choral); Ravel (Piano Trio in A minor) 10.30 Artist of the Week: Angela Gheorghiu 11.00 Sound Stories: Musical Dynasties. Richard Baker profiles the Mozart family 12.00 Composer of the Week: Beethoven. A recital by the pianist Alexander Medzor. Bach (Piano Concerto No 3, The Musical Offering); Berg (Sonata, Op 1); Debussy (Clair de Lune); Liszt (Piano in A minor) 2.00 The BBC Orchestra. BBC Philharmonic under Vasily Sinaisky, with Oliver Charles, violin, Sarah Leonard, soprano, Jean Rigby, mezzo, Paul Whelan, baritone. Huddersfield Choral Society. Dvořák (Carnival Overture); Szymanowski (Stabat Mater); Tchaikovsky (Violin Concerto in D); Martinu (Symphony No 5) 4.00 Concerto Everesting. Live from Gloucester Cathedral 5.00 In Tune. Humphrey Carpenter talks to Hal Prince, whose revival of Showboat comes to London this

month. Plus news of Acta, which opens at Earls Court this weekend, with 600 singers and dancers 7.30 Performance on 3: Beethoven (The Revolutionary. Live from Glasgow City Hall, the continuing Beethoven symphony cycle given by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, under Claudio Vanina. Beethoven (Symphony No 7) 8.10 Rites of Spring. Ronald Hutton traces the history of spring rites 8.30 Concert, part two Stravinsky (The Fire of Spring) 9.20 Postscript: Private View. See Choice (3/5) 9.45 Through Anystray Dance in Green. Madrigals by Byrd and Morley sung by the Cambridge Singers and the Aramys Consort 10.00 The Piano, with Peter Lane. Music includes Schubert (Impromptu, D935); Maria Jose Preiss; Beethoven (Piano Sonata in E minor, Op 9) 10.45 Night Waves. Patrick Wright talks to the historian Antony Beevor about a new study of the battle of Stalingrad during the Second World War 11.30 Jazz Notes, with Digby Fairweather. The Dave Brubeck Quartet recreate their in-concert performance from the Forum, Bath 12.00 Composer of the Week: Weber (i) 1.00am Through the Night, with Donald Macleod

RADIO 4

6.00am Today, with Sue MacGregor and James Naughtie. Includes 6.55, 7.55 Weather 7.25, 8.25 Sports News 7.45 Thought for the Day 8.35 The World at One, with Nicky Campbell 9.00 Midweek, with the Times columnist Libby Purves 9.45 Serials: My Affair with Christianity. Rabbi Lionel Blue reads from the spiritual autobiography (3/5) 9.45 (LW) Daily Service 10.00 News: Woman's Hour, with Janet Murray 11.00 News: Shall We Try Again? Poet Michael Levey experiences a typical day inside Salford Magistrates' Court (3/4) 11.30 Cartoons, Lampoons and Buffoons. Harry Thompson remembers the good and bad satirical programmes on television and radio 12.00 (FBI) News: You and Yours 12.57 Weather 12.00 (LW) News Headlines; Shipping Forecast 1.00 The World at One, with Nicky Campbell 1.30 Games With. The quiz chaired by Barry Took. Regular team member Geoffrey Durham is joined by Sir Jeremy Hanley and Helen Atkinson Wood 2.00 News: The Archers (i) 2.15 Afternoon Plays: Shogun Up, by George Pritchard. A mother welcomes back the son she gave up for adoption. With Edna Doré, Polly James and Helen Thomas 3.00 News: Gardeners' Question Time. Nigel Colborn, John Cusack and Geoffrey Smith answer questions posed by the staff and readers of the Yorkshire Post and Yorkshire Evening Post (i) 3.30 Chat with the Dog: In the City of Few Dogs, with Sofia, a resident of Ryley Park 3.45 Cherry, by Su Tong, translated by Carolyn Choi, read by Alistair Dawson (3/4) 4.00 News: Case Notes, with Graham Easton (i) 4.30

Oxford warmly welcomes faithful retainers

Now don't get over excited, or rush off just yet to resign from your job as a traffic warden in the belief that you are intelligent after all. But if you watched *Wildlife on One* (BBC1) last night, about the creepy-crawlies that flourish in an empty house, and you awoke this morning still able to recall the arresting fact that spiders don't get washed down bath plugholes, but just cling on out of sight until the deluge has stopped before climbing out again, then Richard Dawkins might have a place for you at Balliol.

You see, when he was handing over the trophy to the winners of *University Challenge* (BBC2) last night, Dr Dawkins, Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford, confessed not only that he is an avid watcher of the quiz programme, but also that he is "conducting a campaign at Oxford with my colleagues to

make them abolish the A level as a criterion for admitting students and substitute *University Challenge*. The kind of mind you need to win *University Challenge* — it's not the knowledge that matters — it's the retentive mind to pick things up wherever you are, that you need at university, too."

This is exactly the sort of inventive breakthrough that makes you realise that brainy academics really are different from you and me: they have too much time on their hands. Just look at what facts have done for Japan! Japanese children spend their childhoods learning facts by heart because that is what their exams test them on. But even Japanese educationists now worry that this knack for parrot-fashion fact retention might be what has prevented Japan from winning its share of Nobel prizes for maths and science.

Take this for the sort of fact that

you or I might not bother bending down to pick off the pavement if some stranger dropped it. Jeremy Paxman: "What function may be defined as follows: a real function F to the minus one of X, that if Y equals F of X, then X equals F of Y." Sarah Fitzpatrick, captain of the team from Magdalen, Oxford, consulted her team before announcing: "We don't understand." Paxman — whose truer, gentler colours emerge in his role as *University Challenge* quizmaster — replied: "Neither do I, or any person in the audience. In fact it's an inverse function."

Think about it: have you ever felt an emptiness in your life due to a lack of inverse functions? Did you used to think that an inverse function was an awkward logical problem? If it ever came to your attention that if Y equals F of X, then X equals F of Y, you would be

REVIEW



Joe Joseph

(a) excited; (b) angry; (c) refuse to say anything that might incriminate you without consulting your lawyer? Would you get most pleasure from being given (a) a new yacht; (b) Isabelle Adjani's phone number; (c) the true value of "X" and "Y" when X equals F of X, and Y equals F of Y? Look, if "X" and "Y" wish to remain anonymous, that's fine by us: we've no desire to make their

lives a misery by outing them. Magdalen were doing battle with Birkbeck College, London, which distinguished itself in the last series by notching up one of the lowest ever scores. The part-time Birkbeck students began poorly. They rocketed up later, but they didn't rocket up quite enough. Magdalen won, 225 points to 195, becoming the first institution in the show's 36-year history to win the trophy two years running. Remember that little fact when you apply to Oxford: it could make all the difference between an exhibition and a scholarship.

Now, here's your starter for ten, Professor Dawkins: How did it come to pass that Dr Thomas Noguchi, the famous Los Angeles coroner who examined the corpses of Marilyn Monroe, Sharon Tate, Robert Kennedy and Janis Joplin, found himself examining the mummified body of an old Wild West outlaw called Elmer

McCurdy some 65 years after McCurdy had been shot by an Oklahoma sheriff's posse for a bungled train robbery? Sorry, too slow: *Timewatch* (BBC2) has already given us the answer.

Elmer McCurdy came to light on Tuesday, December 7, 1976, dangling from a noose inside the "Laff In The Dark" ghost-train ride in a Californian amusement park. A crew member working on an episode of *The Six Million Dollar Man* noticed that one of the mannequins inside the tunnel — where a scene was about to be shot — looked more realistic than most papier-mâché models. It was more realistic, even under its layers of luminous red paint. The desiccated body was as light as balsa. It fell to Dr Noguchi to find a name and history. He found the name was McCurdy and the history eventful. For the previous 65 years, the

corpse had spied up everything from small-town carnival shows to cult movies.

Like a picture restorer scraping away years of blackened varnish, Jonathan Gill's film slowly revealed McCurdy's improbable afterlife of all the archive clips that leavened Gill's interviews with freak-show owners who had exhibited McCurdy's corpse, my favourite was of the crooner drumming up business for his carnival's star attraction by singing her praises: "Lydia, Oh Lydia. Say have you met Lydia? Oh Lydia, the tattooed lady. She has eyes that folks adore so. And a torso even more so. Lydia, Oh Lydia. That encyclopedia. Oh Lydia the Queen of Tancoo. For two bits she'll do a mazurka in jazz. With a view of Niagara that no one else has. And on a clear day you can see Alcatraz. You can learn a lot from Lydia."

Who needs Oxford?

BBC1

- 6.00am Business Breakfast (77919)
- 7.00am BBC Breakfast News (730803)
- 9.00am Change That (974364)
- 9.25am Killy (9431884)
- 10.05am Style Challenge (733551)
- 10.30am Can't Cook, Won't Cook (75413754)
- 10.35am The Really Useful Show (9132071)
- 11.35am The General (9285532)
- 12.00am News (7322551)
- 12.05pm The Entertainment Game (3501884)
- 12.35am Wipeout (4196416)
- 1.00am News (7) and weather (33990)
- 1.30am Regional News (7) (7789483)
- 1.40am The Weather Show (64250813)
- 1.45am Neighbours (7) (9270667)
- 2.10am Lion Country (63430803)
- 2.35am Snooker: World Championship Alain Robidoux v Matthew Stevens, Ronnie O'Sullivan v Joe Swail (3327087)
- 3.30am Playdays (1162990) 3.50am Hubbub (9318667) 4.05am The Family Ness (5603551) 4.10am To You (2019919)
- 4.35am The Deadliest Sin (5603551) 4.40am The Family Ness (5603551) 4.45am The Family Ness (5603551) 4.50am The Family Ness (5603551) 4.55am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.00am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.05am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.10am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.15am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.20am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.25am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.30am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.35am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.40am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.45am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.50am The Family Ness (5603551) 5.55am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.00am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.05am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.10am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.15am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.20am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.25am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.30am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.35am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.40am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.45am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.50am The Family Ness (5603551) 6.55am The Family Ness (5603551) 7.00am The Family Ness (5603551) 7.05am 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SNOKER 38

Parrott puts rival to flight at world championship

SPORT

WEDNESDAY APRIL 22 1998

CRICKET 40

Brown quick off the mark for Surrey



United planning £18m bid for Del Piero



Del Piero: imperious

Manchester United have been linked to a bid of £18 million, a British record fee, to bring Alessandro Del Piero, the finest young Italian forward of his generation, to Old Trafford. With the £10 million purchase of Jaap Stam, the Holland defender, likely to be completed this week and with the return to combative health of Roy Keane in midfield, this would give United the spine of genuine European Cup contenders.

The opening of the plc purse, heralded by Alex Ferguson, the manager, last week, when he spoke of a potential £60 million being required to raise United to the heights of Real Madrid, Juventus, AC Milan and Barcelona, is subject to what Del Piero wants.

Informed sources — inevitably agents, for they are the men who

move the market — in Italy speak of an offer already tabled. United deny this, insisting that Del Piero has not been discussed at board level, and that £60 million would never be spent, "even if we had that kind of money". Their reasoning on price may be judged in comparison with the value placed on Oliver Bierhoff, who yesterday confirmed that he will be moving from Udinese to AC Milan for £8 million. Bierhoff is six years older than Del Piero, does not have the same class of finesse or finishing skills and is not that most valued commodity, an Italian hero.

Del Piero, imperious with right-footed free kicks from any distance and elusive to defences that think they have him, is 23. His record of scoring 21 European Cup goals in three seasons has eclipsed those of Marco van Basten, Michel Platini,

Rob Hughes on an audacious transfer coup being considered at Old Trafford

Jari Litmanen... indeed, everyone bar José Altafini, the Brazilian who graced Milan and Juventus in the 1960s.

The question of whether United would really break the transfer record — and, moreover, meet the £25 million-per-season salary demanded for Del Piero — has been answered partially by the fee for Stam. Arguably among the top three European defenders, Stam is 25 and has mental and physical toughness to bring to the English game. Del Piero is much more than that. Because his technique is exquisite, he finds space where none may

seem to exist, because his pace is exceptional, he can create and finish out of nothing, and because, as he demonstrated in Monaco last week, he can volley memorable goals from shoulder height, he is an entertainer as well as a conditioned athlete. He understands the game and knows how to make others play. If United could sign him, he might be the catalyst that has been missing since Eric Cantona retired, the forward of great presence who, even when the team is stale, can score vital goals.

But why would Juventus part with him? Because they always do. Del Piero has not asked for a

transfer, but his lawyers, aware that disloyalty cuts two ways, know that the Juventus principle of *vendere e vincere* — sell and win — has been operated ruthlessly by the club. It assumes matchwinners to be as interchangeable as light bulbs.

Marcello Lippi, the Juventus coach, has season by season, recreated the attack despite the club salesmen, Luciano Moggi and Roberto Betegh, constantly selling his finishers. Vialli and Ravanelli went in 1996, Boksic and Vieri last season, as well as Jurgovic and, before them, Roberto Baggio, Casiraghi, Möller and Paulo Sousa.

Tonight, Del Piero resumes his partnership with Vieri for Italy against Paraguay, one made by Lippi and broken by Moggi when Atlético Madrid signed Vieri for £12 million. A week ago, Del Piero was

seen dining in London with Vialli, now the Chelsea player-manager. The players share the same agent, Claudio Pasqualine, a lawyer who, aware that there are two seasons to go on Del Piero's contract, is happy with speculation that Del Piero admires many United players. For, if United know the price of the player, Del Piero's advisers know his worth to Juventus.

This might be the one player that Juventus dare not sell. Thus, the agent lets it be known that he feels underpaid in comparison with Ronaldo and would listen to offers of a new contract at double his salary. Del Piero wants the future decided by June or, his handlers say, he will allow his contract to run down, Bosman-style. The sting is in the tail and United will only know if the player is for sale once a bid is made.

England coach fields strong side

Hoddle hopes for healing effect of victory

BY OLIVER HOLT, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

HE HAS been made to suffer for them all week. He has been pilloried and ridiculed. All the fury of an inquisition has been unleashed upon him as if he was some sort of crazy heretic. Tonight at Wembley, though, Glenn Hoddle will commit himself to 11 more acts of faith and begin England's countdown to the World Cup in earnest.

The England manager spent much of yesterday's press conference at Bisham Abbey defending once more his inclusion of the healer, Eileen Drewery, in the entourage that accompanies his squad. He was also forced to deny that he had engaged the spoon-bender, Uri Geller, to lend even more fantastical help to the national team by beaming good vibrations down on the players during matches.

Behind all the froth, behind

all the bemused amusement about Hoddle's discomfort, there are matters that cannot be laughed away to contend with beneath the Twin Towers tonight. In this friendly international against Portugal, the first of the quartet of matches that are all England have left before the World Cup begins, the experimenting will stop

and the team will begin to prepare for the real thing.

In Hoddle's normal parlance, his squad will put its "World Cup head on". Yesterday, he chose to say that they will go into "World Cup mode". What it means is that, from tonight, he will probably try to play his strongest XI. The period for giving outside-

ers a chance to force their way in has come to an end. These are the matches for perfecting and honing his best side.

Against Portugal, a quick, skilful team chosen for their similarity to Romania and Colombia, two of England's group opponents in France, the team, with the obvious exception of Alan Shearer for Ian Wright, is likely to be very close to the one that gained the goalless draw in Rome in October and won its way through to the finals by right.

At last, the "spine" of David Seaman, Tony Adams, Paul Ince and Shearer that Hoddle relies upon even more than a healer's hands will be in place again. Ince said on Monday that if they could stay fit, England had the ability to win the tournament.

The only problem is the fitness of Paul Gascoigne. His injury problems seem to have followed him doggedly from Glasgow to Middlesbrough and he is trying desperately to overcome ankle and groin problems. Hoddle said that he rated his chances of taking the field against the Portuguese at only 40 per cent. If he does not play, his place will probably be taken by Paul Scholes, of Manchester United.

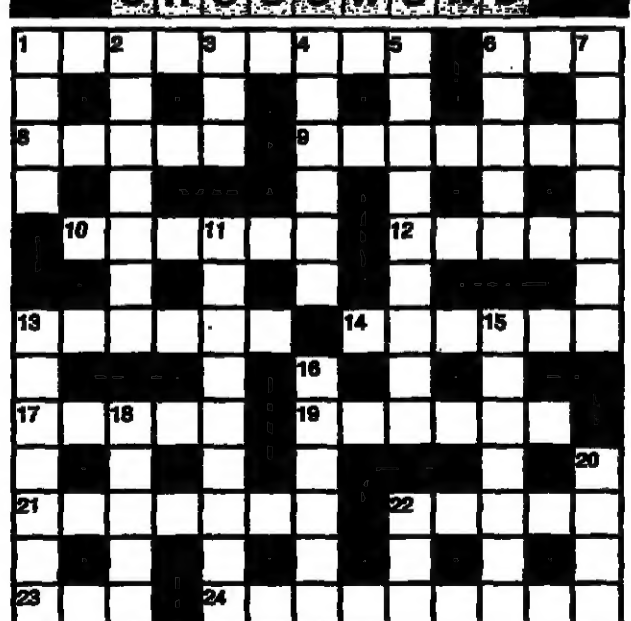
"Gascoigne is struggling for tomorrow, that's for sure," Hoddle said. "His injuries could need rest and we have got to look at the overall situation in the long term to get him possibly fit by the end of the season. If I feel the ankle isn't right, that he'd be playing 75 per cent fit, that would be too much of a risk. It would put him under strain and by making it worse we could put him out of football for two or three weeks."

At least Gascoigne still has a fighting chance of recovery. Jamie Redknapp, who would have made an able understudy to the mercurial midfielder, was told



Hoddle ponders his injury problems and his line-up for the match against Portugal at Wembley tonight. Gascoigne is his main fitness worry

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1386

- ACROSS**
- State as Brunei, Oman (9)
 - Assistance (3)
 - Work for eight (5)
 - Distilling retort (once) (7)
 - Dress ornament: sounds like open (6)
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 - Savour (6)
 - Raps, pinks (engine) (6)
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 - Printed mistakes (6)
 - Displaced person (7)
 - Kidskin (5)
 - Word of assent (3)
 - Handing: medical attention (9)
- DOWN**
- Go away! (4)
 - Of the side: sort of thinking (7)
 - Relevant (3)
 - Lack of interest (6)
 - Surprising event (3-6)
 - Religious house (5)
 - Chuzzlewit author (7)
 - Furious attack (9)
 - Take a new wife (7)
 - A jewel: a road marking (4-3)
 - Become distant (6)
 - Raises: antics (5)
 - Subsequent (4)
 - Took (exam): did judging session (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 1385

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